May is special around the Jazz Record office. It is our birthday month, another chance, after our January Best Of issue, to reflect on the year that has passed. But, to belabor a point that has been made endlessly, the past year has had little to celebrate. With this issue, we have now published 14 digital-only editions; what was first a stop-gap measure has become the norm, just like leaving the house without a mask seems like a dream. Things seem to be improving: vaccines are available; the weather is warming up, allowing for shows to take place outside; NYC regulations have been relaxed and some clubs are reopening...as gently as a flower opening for the first time of the season. But—and this is a Sir Mix-a-Lot-sized but—this is not the time to stop being vigilant, lest we end up right back where we were a year ago, a terrifying thought.

Most of our features and CD Reviews are reflective of the current state of semi-lockdown: violinist Mark Feldman (On The Cover), saxophonist Mark Shim (Artist Feature) both have live-streaming events this month. So too does saxophonist/flutist Carol Sudhalter (Interview) but she also performs en plein-air. There are numerous concerts scheduled at various parks throughout the city, so dust yourself off and go support musicians who have missed audiences as much as audiences have missed them.
Violinist Mark Feldman, born and soon to be based again in Chicago, has worked with some of the biggest names in jazz: John Zorn, John Abercrombie, Marc Ribot, Bill Frisell, Dave Douglas, Billy Hart, Lee Konitz, Pharoah Sanders and many others. He has also recorded and performed with musicians outside of jazz including country artists Loretta Lynn, Ray Price, Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash and indie-pop rockers They Might Be Giants.

Feldman recently released a solo album, *Sounding Point* (Intakt), overdubbing himself for a multi-layered string experience. The album opens with the composition "As You" written by bowed pianist and collaborator Sylvie Courvoisier. In this first track alone, the listener immediately hears Feldman’s wide-ranging vocabulary. With seemingly effortless skill, he astonishingly flits between glissandi and vigorous snap pizzicato that at times brings to mind the music of Béla Bartók. About three-quarters of the way through, Feldman lets loose a cascade of notes veering into free jazz and finishes with his bow stroking long, slightly atonal chords. It’s stunning stuff that demands careful consideration.

Regarding the choice to cover Courvoisier’s piece, Feldman says, “We were partners for a long time. I knew the tune from her last record and I heard her practice it a lot. I didn’t even question my choice; I just thought it sounded good and decided to do it.”

*Sounding Point* includes another cover, Ornette Coleman’s “Peace Warriors”. “The head is multi-tracked and the middle section has shout choruses, but it’s still a solo violin performance,” he explains.

Feldman has been playing the tune since the ‘90s in a band that included trumpeter Douglas and banjoist Razo Harris. “Ornette played violin in addition to trumpet and alto saxophone. I heard John Zorn do it on his album *Naked City*. So it was always a tune I liked. When I was doing this record, it just popped into my head. I imagined it with a big band approach with shout choruses and parallel harmonies, but all with violins using a multi-track,” he says.

The album was recorded at Feldman’s home in Brooklyn, New York, which he calls Studio Lulu. “Basically, I put curtains over the doors and windows and I hired somebody to be the engineer, so that I didn’t have to think about all the technical things. I recorded it onto a laptop to Pro Tools,” he explains. Having recorded at his house before, Feldman has figured out the resonant corners of his apartment. Once satisfied with the tracks, he sent the files to Ryan Streber at Oktaven audio, who balanced and mastered the sound. “There wasn’t even any mixing per se,” he says. About working at Studio Lulu, Feldman says, “It’s easier to focus and not be under the pressure of the clock ticking. I don’t need isolation or headphones and I already know which room my violin sounds good in.”

As to what inspired him to do this project, Feldman knew he was leaving New York, which he says gave him the energy to get it done. He also got a push from abroad. “Patrik Landolt, who works Intakt Records in Switzerland, had heard my solo work before and asked me to do another solo record. Once the pandemic hit, we revisited the idea. It was the perfect time,” he recounts.

Reflecting on his career and the evolution of his style, Feldman says, “I always wanted to be a creative musician, but I worked as a studio musician to support myself. As soon as you tell people you’ve played with someone, they read it into me. For me, I was using it as a way to move forward with my life and pay bills. But of course, there are some things that carry back and forth.” In terms of the role of the violin and its connections to jazz and other music, Feldman says, “For me the real continuation comes out of [Polish violinist] Zbigniew Seifert. He was probably the most significant jazz violinist for me. Content-wise, his playing drew heavily from the pentatonic period of John Coltrane and Eastern European classical music with a very masculine sound, maybe like Bartók. I copied him a lot until around 1998 and then I shifted away from it when I realized I was copying.”

For Feldman, developing a signature sound is something that evolved naturally and without too much forethought: “I did it by not thinking about it. To me it’s like when you pick up the phone and speak to a friend. You know how his voice is. I never tried to develop any sound. I just believe that the sound of a musician is a natural thing. It certainly is for singers. You listen to a singer and think ‘He was born with that.’ I look at it the same way, like a singer. That’s what I’ve got.”

Thinking on his many collaborations over the years, Feldman is enthusiastic. “I worked with a lot of people. Occasionally I played in a quartet with the late guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joey Baron. I did five ECM records and lots of European and American tours. I played in drummer Billy Hart’s quartet for about three years in the ‘90s, which was an extended association with saxophonist John Stubblefield, pianist Dave Fiuczynski. I did four nights at Jazz at Lincoln Center with Paul Bley and another duo at Lincoln Center with Muhal Richard Abrams, which were both cool. I did a lot of work with my partner Sylvie Courvoisier and a ton of work with John Zorn in his different groups.

I played in Bar Kokhba, a larger group with guitarist John Taylor, Swedish bass player Anders Jormin and Brazilian percussionist Cyro Baptista. We traveled a lot,” he recalls. Feldman did soundtracks and hundreds of CDs in New York as a sideman. In 2005 he recorded his own album *What Exit* for ECM with the late British pianist John Taylor, Swedish bass player Anders Jormin and New York drummer Tom Rainey. He also worked with saxophonist Michael Brecker on his second-to-last record, recorded and toured with saxophonist Chris Potter. Feldman even worked with percussionist Trilok Gurtu for a while, who played with John McLaughlin and Miles Davis. “Those are a few highlights,” he recounts.

What’s been the key to success? “Mostly, I respond to what’s going on and not second guess stuff. I just go for it. I always felt like I was the same person; I never tried to disguise who I was. Whenever I did that, it always had the worst outcome. I figure if someone calls me, they want me to be me. It’s their responsibility to know what I can do. The more I believed in that, the more successful I was,” Feldman says.

When composing music, Feldman uses several different processes. “I usually have the blank page crisis for one or two days. Then you get to a certain point where you push the rock up the hill and then it starts rolling down the hill. And you think, ‘OK, this thing is now riding itself.’ Another way is that you just start writing as much as possible without caring about the content or the quality. It’s like poetry magnets. I compose like that. I write tons of shit. I don’t care what it is. It’s more about just getting stuff on paper. And then I remove stuff after that initial dump. I look at it like a sculpture process,” he says.

Technologically speaking, Feldman prefers simplicity. “I’m an old guy and had already been working before all this modern technology. When I was getting started, people had four-track cassette decks and then sequencers came later. Now I use Sibelius and Pro Tools. I usually write in pen and paper and try to remove things. What’s left when I remove things is the piece. When I do additive stuff, I use pen and paper and then enter it into Sibelius and then play it back on the sequencer, which you can manipulate from there,” he explains.

For most musicians, who earn their living from live performances, the pandemic has been hugely disruptive. For Feldman, it has also been challenging with public performances canceled worldwide.

“My last gig was last March [2020] in Belgium and I haven’t engaged in anything since then. But I am doing a solo virtual concert at the Soapbox Gallery in Brooklyn, which is a gallery and performance space. They have a good series on jazz and improvisation during the week,” he says.

Thinking about the future, Feldman sounds cautiously optimistic and says, “At the end of May I’m moving to Chicago and am hoping that maybe I’ll start some musical things with the people that live there. I have a whole month of gigs in Belgium next year. Right now that’s about all. I’m not as busy as I used to be. But musicians never really retire, do they?”

For more information, visit markfeldmanviolin.com. Feldman live-streams solo May 12th at soapboxgallery.org.

Recommended Listening:

- **Mark Dresser/Mark Feldman/Hank Roberts—Arcado** (*MT-Winter&Winter, 1989*)
- **Dave Douglas—Five** (*Soul Note, 1995*)
- **Masada String Trio—John Zorn 50th Birthday Celebration, Vol. 1** (*Tzadik, 2003*)
- **Mark Feldman—What Exit** (*ECM, 2005*)
- **Mark Feldman—Sounding Point** (*Intakt, 2020*)
Who says jazz has to be the exclusive preserve of cognoscenti huddled over small tables in crowded, dimly lit nightclubs? As multi-instrumentalist Daniel Carter proved on a recent afternoon (Apr. 15th) in Brooklyn’s Prospect Park, jazz can speak to the “incognoscenti” too: those folks—out jogging or biking around the belt road, practicing jujitsu, walking their dogs, barbecuing or whatever—weren’t even paying attention to the music until the impromptu vibrations swept by but surely permeated their psyches. Joining Carter on a small patch of turf adjacent to the park’s bandshell were Roshni Samlal (tablas) and Dan Kurfirst (drums), who set up between them a lifting rhythmic bed of steady eighth-notes (and triplets at one point) over which Carter floated placid but pungent themes (or near-themes), hoisting a new horn for each new episode, first flute, then muted trumpet and saxophones (tenor, soprano and alto). There was a small battery amp to boost the tablas, but the overall volume remained soft and subdued, merging with the shouts and laughter of children playing on the nearby slides and swings. Some of these small humans, unsure what to make of Carter’s shiny brass instruments, milled closer as he played, transfixed by the curious tones. There was some rain earlier and it looked like more was on the way, but perhaps the weather gods too were listening as the music lofted into the overcast skies, because they stayed the workwar just a bit longer, not wanting to break the mood. —Tom Greenland

Brooklyn’s sixth annual BRIC JazzFest (Apr. 8th-10th) reflected the events of this remarkable year: COVID kept everyone home, watching the live-stream performances (three per night) as the artists played to an essentially empty house. The program, inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, was comprised of (mostly) local artists and between-act film clips endorsing racial justice. Many of the headliners—(mostly) local artists and between-act film clips endorsing racial justice. Many of the headliners—

Meridian d’Ambrosio
SOMETIME AGO
SSC 1598
AVAILABLE 5/14/21

—Jazz Times: She has, very much akin to Mabel Mercer, always maintained a less-is-more approach, a hushed elegance that gently propels each song like a paper boat across a still pond
—Christopher Loudon

Pianist Keith Brown delivered a lush, classically-influenced solo intro to a Bobby Hutcherson tune while the solo intro by bassist Ben Williams to Harris original “Chasin Kindall” was also noteworthy. A new take on the classic “What a Wonderful World”, while brightly innovative musically, transformed the vocals into a disappointing R&B art song, sung by Casey Benjamin, who far excels in ability on saxophone and vocoder. Drummer Terreon Gully proved a steady force throughout. The encore, “Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans”, Zollar and Thomas returning, was a fitting, traditional ending. —Marilyn Lester

The phrase is worn out but the sentiment is nonetheless true: Fred Hersch is a force of nature. The 15-time Grammy nominee is a pianist with a seemingly unending supply of off-the-charts creativity. In Jazz Standard’s virtual The Flip Side Sessions, Hersch’s Trio with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Jochen Rueckert (Apr. 2nd) presented a stellar program of standards and originals, all highly engaging, without a lost moment within them. Immediately revealed at the head of the session was the maestro’s vividly articulate head of the session was the maestro’s vividly articulate

DOV MANSKI
ERIN PARSH
THE HUE OF SILENCE
SSC 1817
AVAILABLE 5/21/21

Together, the visual and audio components that combine to comprise Manksi and Parsh’s The Hue of Silence are ethereally stimulating, creating a complex program that feeds the eyes and ears

DOV MANSKI: piano, wurlitzer, programs
ERIN PARSH: paintings

www.sunnysidererecords.com

James Zollar

Capping the first conference day of the Louis Armstrong International Continuum (Apr. 8th) was the James Zollar Quartet with guest Brianna Thomas, Stefon Harris & Blackout. Thomas has shown considerable growth since her days starting out—she’s more confident now and has a stronger stage presence along with more powerful vocals. Her phrasing on “Drop Me Off in Harlem” was matched by Zollar’s articulate playing and deft plunger work. “Dream a Little Dream of Me” was enhanced by a creative backbeat from bassist Peter Washington and solid drummer Sean Mason. When it comes to vibraphone/marimba playing, Harris is unendingly dynamic and innovative. His group, with a long history, was cohesive and in the pocket. “Dat Dere” was an homage to drummer Art Blakey, elevating the tune to modern sensibilities with inventive turns. Pianist Keith Brown delivered a lush, classically-influenced solo intro to a Bobby Hutcherson tune while the solo intro by bassist Ben Williams to Harris original “Chasin Kindall” was also noteworthy. A new take on the classic “What a Wonderful World”, while brightly innovative musically, transformed the vocals into a disappointing R&B art song, sung by Casey Benjamin, who far excels in ability on saxophone and vocoder. Drummer Terreon Gully proved a steady force throughout. The encore, “Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans”, Zollar and Thomas returning, was a fitting, traditional ending. —Marilyn Lester

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Chilly temperatures and blustery winds drove the crowd for Brooklyn Rooftop Jazz Series’ Friday night (Apr. 9th) performance by the Philip Harper Quintet inside the well-appointed 14 B Lounge at its Sunset Park waterfront warehouse site. Trumpeter Harper and tenor saxophonist Jonathan Beshay in the frontline, backed by the rhythm section of keyboard player Miki Yamanaka, bassist Dishan Harper and drummer Curtis Nowasad, got things off to a rousing start with a hardbop version of Sonny Rollins’ “A Love Supreme.”

Zeena Parkins cultivated untouched sonic ground to bring the horn, once almost completely coveted by the symphony and folksong, into new music. Since moving to New York in 1984, she’s used the full-scale acoustic horn and singularly designed electric horns with a first-line Downtown cadre and then some: Braxton, Zorn, Ono, Oliveros, Morris, No Safety, Rzewski, Skeleton Crew and the Jasper Johns Dance Company, among many. No surprise, Parkins’ recent live-stream at Roulette (Apr. 8th) offered two vastly different sound palettes. Set one, with vocalist Megan Schubert, focused on sound exploration with Parkins on an electric instrument and effects. “EK Stasis” was inspired by late Bay Area artist Jay DeFeo, a contemporary and comrade of the Beats, whose creative boundlessness was felt throughout the evening. Schubert’s vocal lines exposed croaks and cobs often matched Parkins’ textures, adding harmonies and echoes. Following this, Green Dome, Parkins’ spectacular trio with drummer Ryan Sawyer and pianist Ryan Ross Smith, performed “Lace, in our city,” a lilting sort of modal jazz strained through the Dietz-Schwartz classic, open, ringing piano chords sending the vocal melody into melisma. “Music is one of the things that has kept us going,” Wolper explained, only slightly breathlessly after the sounding of this note-standard. The singer, a veteran who roused from the wholly improvised to contemporary classical, has often worked with Filiano, a bassist unlike most any other. His conflation of Charles Mingus, Jimmie Blanton and Scott La Faro has only been described as a gift to those in his air-space, evidenced to Cavaan, rich, dominant basslines leaping over and through the tune against icing passing piano tones and chord fragments. Other works included one of 6/4-meter with repetitive melodic figures over dramatically shifting harmonies, the lyrico horn of an article in The New York Times. And then there was Richard Rodgers’ “Something Good”, reimagined with solo arco bass leading into Wolper’s dark-throated vocal improvisation, surely speaking of the night itself. — John Pietro

WHAT’S THE NEWS

The Robert D. Bialecki Foundation has announced its latest grant recipients: "In the Dark” House Records Catalyst Fund; Can’t Run Away, Louth Contemporary Music Society and Birdland. For more information, visit rdbf.org/jazz2021 for various celebrations.

Award-winning vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant has entered into partnerships with Billy Holiday, which will offer her drawing strength on ballads and bright lines, and Picture Room, which will sell her original artwork. For more information, visit sailehouseandpictureroom.com.

Among the recent Academy Award winners was Jon Batiste/Trent Reznor/Anthony Ross for their score for Tenet’s Soul of One, which the 45th annuncement of the film has received for its music.

Harlem Stage’s 2021 Gala, “Art and Activism,” will take place virtually May 21st at 8pm/7pm/6pm/5pm and feature performances by Vijay Iyer, Jose James, Elena Pendifurr and others. For more information, visit Harlemstage.org/gala2021.

Lincoln Center presents Restart Stages, starting May 10th, an outdoor performing arts center constructed on the Lincoln Center campus with numerous events throughout the month, including Eddie Palmieri, Pauline Jean and Gwofin Louis, Red Bartan and more. For more information, visit RestartStages.org.

Among the latest recipients of Guggenheim Fellowships are Rez Abbasi, Mike Reed and Wadada Leo Smith. For more information, visit guggenheim.org.

In celebration of its 20th Anniversary, Vancouver-based Collage Live Records has announced a series of initiatives, including a hyper-speed, hyper-curated, hyper-quality online store designed to raise funds for three albums by Black artists; a partnership with The Small and Live Foundation, releasing recorded specially commissioned works; and 15 albums from an array of hyper-curated artists. For more information, visit collagerecords.ca.

A celebration of the recently published William Parker biography by Cisco Brady, Universally Tonal — The Life and Music of William Parker (University of California Press), will take place virtually on May 19th. For more information, visit howandwhatindiecenter.com.

The 2021 Jazz Journalists Association Jazz Awards nominees have been announced in 47 categories of jazz and jazz media (this gazette for Print Periodical Website of the Year). In addition, the latest issues of Jazz Heroes has also been named, with local honorees being Gall Boyd and Louie Rogers. For more information, visit jazzjazzjazzjazz.org.

Initiating Impulse! Records’ 50th Anniversary celebration is the release of Music, Message and the Moment, a four-LP boxed set with tracks by John Coltrane, Quincy Jones, Charles Mingus, Oliver Nelson, Pharoah Sanders, Archie Shepp and other Impulse artists, plus liner notes by Greg Tate and A.B. Spellman as well as an audiophile reissue series beginning with Ray Charles’ Genius of the Jazz and Gil Evans Orchestra’s Cut of the Cool. For more information, visit impulserecords.com.

Edition Records and bassist Dave Holland’s Dare2 label have partnered, with the first foil released on May 28th, Another Land with KennyElvidge and drummer Obed Calvaire. For more information, visit editionrecords.com.

Noted music writer Ted Gioia has announced the launch of a subscription newsletter, Culture Notes of an Honest Broker, via the Substack platform, described as a “trustworthy guide to music, books, and culture—with a mix of trenchant analysis, book reviews, commentary, interviews, and amusements.” For more information, visit tedgioia.substack.com.

The 2021 Jazz Congress, presented in partnership by Jazz at Lincoln Center and Jazz at Lincoln Center’s in-person performance return to the Bards, taking place in the Amory’s expansive Walter Thompson Grill Hall May 5th. For more information, visit jazzcongress.org.

Park Avenue Armory will present Jason Moran and LaVernier Anderson in four “improvisational sonic meditations dedicated to the city of New York” titled Party in the Bardo, taking place in the Armory’s expansive Wade Thompson Drill Hall May 17th. For more information and to register, visit jazzcongress.org.

Jazz at Lincoln Center’s new semester of Swing University has begun, offering virtual classes on John Coltrane, Jazz 101, How to Read Thelonious, Louis Armstrong, iconic Jazz Musicians, Ornette Coleman, Roots and Rhymes of Latin Jazz, Elia Fitzgerald, Great Arrangers of Jazz and The Rise of Jazz- Rock Fusion. For more information and to register, visit 2021.jazz.org.

Various Award News: 2021 Recipients of the Instant Award in Improvised Music are Henry Threadgill and the rhythm displaced Milford Graves. Music and Found Sound by St. Radegund (Wild Daisy Research) won Outstanding Jazz Album - Instrumental at the NAACP Image Awards. The 10th European Jazz Network Award for Adventurous Programme went to Jazzfest Berlin. New Music Performance Development funding is up to $15,000, recipients include Ingrid Laubrock; Christina Tordoir; David Leon; Helen Suy; Hey Pazy; Jean Costa Rodenas; Katsia Shih; Luke Stewart; Melanie Dyer; Ritchie Goodg and Tonia Nunn.

Registration is open for Make Music New York, taking place on Jun 21st for free throughout the city’s public spaces. For more information, visit mkmnewyork.org/register.

South Arts is now accepting applications for its Jazz Road Creative Residencies Grant, $3,000 for a 4-week fellowship, visit salter.house.

Blank Forms and Gimmie-Artis.Admin have announced a collaborative series of “awards” launching in early April, beginning with Blank Beer, a rotating alesister large variety available exclusively at Blank Forms events and the Gimmie brewhouse East Harwich.

Submit news to ahennick@nygijazzrecord.com
When baritone saxophonist/flutist Carol Sudhalter arrived in New York from her native Boston circa 1978, she settled in Queens, which could boast of being homebase for Louis Armstrong and numerous other jazz musicians. Sudhalter formed the Astoria Big Band in 1986 and has kept the group going ever since. The group, with original arrangements by some top names, has gotten more than 20 grants from the Queens Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Sudhalter also leads the monthly Louis Armstrong Legacy Jazz Jam at Fishtown Town Hall; it’s virtual now, but should be back in the hall soon. Other Sudhalter cultural contributions to her adopted home include founding the Athens Square Park Jazz Mondays, the Astoria/LIC Waterfront Jazz Festival and the Sunset Jazz Concerts at Ralph DeMarco Park.

The New York City Jazz Record: How did you get started on baritone?

Carol Sudhalter: Great question. I started late with the saxophones, originally on tenor. My father was an alto player, a great alto player, and I acquired his alto when he died. So I was playing that. Somehow I began listening to baritone and just became very enchanted with the sound of it. I found that it brought out my female energy, whereas the tenor brought out my male energy. I know that doesn’t make sense to anyone but that’s the way I felt it.

TNYCJR: Two different schools of the baritone are the playing of Gerry Mulligan on the cool side and Pepper Adams or Gary Smulyan with hardbop on the hot side. Would it be fair to say your playing is somewhere in between those two poles?

CS: I would align myself instead with Harry Carney [from the Duke Ellington Orchestra], at least a little bit. I’m into the baritone as a very lyrical instrument. I adore Pepper Adams and all the people you just mentioned, plus Leo Parker and Cecil Payne. Maybe Harry Carney and Leo Parker when they play ballads, that’s my model. I go for the really rich colors and low notes.

TNYCJR: So you’re originally from Boston? Was that a good place to grow up for someone who wanted to play jazz?

CS: I’m from Newton. I think it was great. My brother [Dick Sudhalter, a jazz trumpetist, journalist and author] and my father [alto saxophonist Al Sudhalter] both played in clubs around Boston. My father played at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin, my brother at the Statler Hilton with Eddy Duchin. He wanted me to get married and get a nice job writing everything to discourage me. I had originally thought I might become an entomologist, because I was very interested in insects and got me into a band in Harlem as lead alto. What were very sexist attitudes in the ’60s and ’70s was starting to turn around by the ’80s.

TNYCJR: Claire Daly is another woman who plays the baritone.

CS: She’s quite a well-known baritone player and very, very good. There are many in the succeeding generations, like Lauren Sevian, some incredible players.

See page 24 for more of Carol Sudhalter’s interview.

ELEGANT FISH

The new album from acclaimed Brazilian saxophonist and flutist Márcio Resende featuring Toninho Horta (guitar) and Sandro Albert (guitar/production) is available now.

For information visit www.marcioresende.com

BY JIM MOTAVALLI

CAROL SUDHALTER

Definitely, I felt immediately that this was the place for me to be. The pool of musicians is endless. And actually about a year after I got here, since I was doing club dates, I thought I could select the venues better if I started my own booking agency. The business provided jazz trios and so forth for birthdays and anniversaries and it meant I didn’t have to play in a lot of loud wedding bands. I’d get these special requests and I really enjoyed filling them: a bassoonist or a bagpiper to play in the lobby of a building. All these different things. The music might be a mix of jazz, Latin, classical. It was wonderful, but I don’t do it anymore.

TNYCJR: It sounds like you’ve been pretty good at putting things together so you didn’t have to have a day job.

CS: That’s right, though I did have a day job when I moved here to join Latin Fever, which was the first all-female Latin band. The band didn’t have all that much work, though we did play at Madison Square Garden. So I got a job as a medical transcriptionist. I was very good at taking dictation. That kept me going, but gradually I acquired a nice pool of students. I really, really like private teaching. So yes, I figured out ways to make a living. I had originally thought I might become an entomologist, because I was very inspired by Rachel Carson and Silent Spring and I studied to be a science writer. I worked briefly for the USDA in Washington, but it didn’t work out. I was starting to take music more and more seriously. My poor father saved all his life to send me to this very refined school, Smith College, so I’d become anything other than a musician. I felt so guilty.

TNYCJR: But he was a musician himself.

CS: He was a great alto sax player, but he was very cynical about the music world. He thought it was just not nice and especially not nice for women. When I announced in my last year of college that I was going to become a musician and not a science writer, he tried everything to discourage me. He was very disappointed. He wanted me to get married and get a nice job writing about science. I was taking classes in Third Stream music at New England Conservatory and he finally consented, after a big argument, to come to one of my concerts. He had tears in his eyes, praised me and said it was a beautiful event. He died soon after that.

TNYCJR: Did anyone besides your dad try to discourage you from playing saxophone because you were female?

CS: Oh yes. I started on saxophones when I was 32. My first boyfriend, a trumpet player, said to me when I picked up the tenor, “You really should look at why you picked this instrument. You should look at your motives. Why would you pick a man’s instrument?” A few years later, when I moved to New York, he was the first one to support me. He totally turned around and got me into a band in Harlem as lead alto. What were very sexist attitudes in the ’60s and ’70s was starting to turn around by the ’80s.

TNYCJR: Claire Daly is another woman who plays the baritone.

CS: She’s quite a well-known baritone player and very, very good. There are many in the succeeding generations, like Lauren Sevian, some incredible players.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 23)
For a listener who has been fortunate to catch tenor saxophonist Mark Shim live or hear him via the relatively small number of recordings of which he’s been a part, either as a leader or sideman, the paucity of exposure is frustrating. Shim is one of the most unique and exciting players on the contemporary jazz scene, with a sound that carries a powerful sheer effect and ideas about improvisation pushing at the edges of modern jazz from the inside out.


As a sideman, his fiery playing is a substantial feature on guitarist David Gilmore’s *Transitions* and bassist Matt Brewer’s *Gangmede* (both on Criss Cross) and he’s a terrific foil and partner for Steve Lehman on the alto saxophonist’s albums *Artificial Light* (Fresh Sound-New Talent) and *Trazzel, Transformation and Flow* and *Mise en Abîme* (*Pi* Recordings), where his approach to rhythm, both complex and funky, is right at home with Lehman’s compositional structures.

Both fans and the uninitiated should take note that Shim has a performance scheduled for May 12th, a live-stream show, with masks, from Bar Bayeux via the venue’s Facebook page (and then archived for a week on YouTube). He’ll be playing in a trio with Brewer and drummer Tyshawn Sorey.

His career launched when he was barely in his 20s, touring with Carter. Talking on the phone from his apartment in Brooklyn about this past pandemic year and what he’s been working on, he expressed deep admiration for the extraordinary singer and her musicality, Shim says, “I was really too young to appreciate her genius,” at the time he was playing with her. “I knew I was standing next to greatness. Now it’s remarkable to listen back and understand how meticulous she was with rhythm. Everything she did had purpose, pitch-wise and rhythm-wise.

Rhythm is one major component of his distinctive, gripping playing, the other the burly, warm sound he produces in all registers of the tenor. “My first teacher in college,” Skip Gailes, at Virginia Commonwealth University, he explains, “was really interested in having a big sound. It’s taken many years for me to craft those lessons into a sound.” Laughing, he admits that the sheer weight of it “sometimes strikes me as overbearing.” Developing that sound meant working through some major influences. “I was definitely a Joe Henderson freak,” he points out. “I was emulating him a lot, it actually became a problem!”

That sound always keeps his playing firmly planted in meaning and expression, but it’s still malleable. “As I got older, I got more into late ‘80s Sonny Rollins. I appreciated the power and aggression in his playing, that dark core.” Even after spending decades working on his sound, which has “been frustrating at times,” the work is still not done and the pandemic turned into a major woodshedding opportunity for Shim. “I’ve changed a lot during this pandemic, my embouchure,” he says. And he adds, “I’ve been playing standards again,” after years away from jazz repertoire.

That’s intriguing from such a modern stylist. His classic, weighty sound is the soulful, expressive side of a complex concept, realized in immaculate technique, of sub-dividing beats into quintuplets and beyond and setting odd numbers against even meters. He can be seen demonstrating this in a video produced for the My Music Masterclass site, “Developing Your Rhythmic Concept”. In that video and in his playing, he goes beyond standard swing rhythms and quarter-note meters into fitting consistent strings of odd-numbered notes into each beat, setting three against two and five against four.

“Ve’ve always been interested in rhythm,” he points out and “started to listen to jazz seriously” late in high school. By that time, “I was already heavily into rhythm, via hip-hop. I have a desire to hear as much rhythmic complexity as I can. But you can push it too far and lose the soulful element. I think this is a problem with younger musicians, making things complex and sophisticated but sterile. I have a desire to search for new possibilities for improvising. It’s one thing to be playing standard forms—that’s one thing I’ve been revisiting this past year, after playing all those gigs that fry your brains,” like with the Steve Lehman Octet, “that’s something I’ve been working on for a long time, preparing myself to work with complex rhythms and harmonies.”

Along with the deep woodshedding and return to the roots of jazz via standards, Shim has been teaching this past year, although with some ambivalence. He’s taught previously at Banff, but pandemic teaching has been as much a matter of circumstances as anything else. He’s been giving lessons online during the pandemic, lately through the New School, but admits he doesn’t “really like” remote teaching, which frustrates close observation of students’ technique. “When the pandemic started,” he explains, “a lot of younger musicians started reaching out to musicians,” who have inspired them, “looking to get lessons online. But working through Zoom isn’t really my cup of tea.”

Once the fall semester started at the New School, however, “I got some students through them and just bucked up.”

As grueling and frustrating as the pandemic has been for so many, including musicians, Shim sounds more than philosophical about the experience, even optimistic. Talking about the Bar Bayeux gig and the musicians he’s brought into it, he comes off as clearly and inner exploration leading up to the date. “I haven’t played with humans in over a year!”, he points out, “but I’ve got high hopes, I’ve really made a lot of advancement this past year.”

Recommended Listening:
- Mark Shim—*Turbulent Flow* (Blue Note, 1999)
- Carlo de Rosa Cross-Fade—*Brain Dance* (*Cuneiform*, 2009)
- Steve Lehman Octet—*Mise en Abîme* (*Pi*, 2014)
- Vijay Iyer Sextet—*Far From Over* (*ECM*, 2017)
- Matt Brewer—*Gangmede* (*Criss Cross*, 2018)

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In an amazing bout of creativity and endurance English composer and bandleader Mike Westbrook, who turned 85 in March, provided listeners all over the world with a precious selection of films documenting his 50+ years of activity with the Mike Westbrook Jazz Motion Picture Show, available on his website. It's an excellent starting point after which you'll want to listen to his original music, his classic celebrations of the great composers of the past like Rossini and Ellington to his own memorable renditions in music of lyrics by Blake and many other poets, a concept that accompanied him over the years in projects like The Cortège and London Bridge is Broken Down, still two of the most accomplished records in Westbrook's canon.

The starting point for Westbrook is unmistakably the creative orchestral tradition of African-American composers like Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus; he shares with them the unending search for ways to integrate soloists' improvised contributions into the prepared score. He also has the most precious ally in the supple voice and dramatic gift of his life and art companion, painter and musician Kate Westbrook, a constant presence in his music for almost 50 years. Her voice is an essential element of the music they created together, a unifying factor, as Brian Morton wrote, in a career that has spanned decades and all genres: a relationship not unlike the one between Steve Lacy and Irene Aebi and equally irksome for the male-dominated jazz world.

Westbrook was an art teacher in Plymouth in the late ‘50s, a jazz fan playing trumpet and aspiring to be a composer, inspired by blues and boogie. He founded a sextet with guitarist/future AMM founder Keith Rowe and South African bassist Harry Miller and their Derrum albums, Celebration and Release, were a manifesto of the upcoming European jazz of the ‘70s and showcase for Surman’s many talents as soloist and composer. The first album is based only on original compositions while the second features rearrangements of an eclectic choice of songs, including “Lover Man”, “Flying Home” and “The Girl from Ipanema”, establishing another key theme of Westbrook’s oeuvre. Since then the list of his collaborators over the decades reads like a Who’s Who of UK and European jazz.

The following album, 1969’s Marching Song, released at the time as two separate LPs but now available on CD in its entirety, is a pacific jazz symphony, an ecological statement including text-based music from mid ‘70s-mid ‘80s ranges from the brilliant solo Piano, with its echoes of Monk and stride, to the major suite London Bridge is Broken Down, his first collaboration with a full classical ensemble. Westbrook recalled the mishaps at the premiere in Amiens, France: “...it was a European work that included English poetry and French and German poetry selected by Kate with the help of European friends. There was a long period of rehearsal in London and several trips to Amiens, before the two ensembles met for the premiere. London Bridge was long and the conductor Alexandre Myrat proposed performing it in three parts. The concert opened with a popular French/Canadian duo who clearly delighted the jazz festival audience. They came back again and again for encores while 50 of us waited in the wings. The first part of London Bridge went fine. Unfortunately the message had not gotten through to most of the audience that there were three parts to the composition. A sizeable number...”

Westbrook then had a proposal of forming a street band to play at fringe theater festivals and community arts events with the “magicians’ collective” Welfare State (the street theater company founded by John Fox in 1968). After Westbrook, the Musical Director of the company would be Lol Coxhill. This became the basis for the Brass Band, a group that formed the Westbrook’s main touring group and the nucleus of many future projects, including The Cortège. A milestone was receiving a commission to write for the Swedish Radio Jazz Orchestra featuring Surman as soloist. Citadel/Room 315 premiered in 1974 in Stockholm: “I wrote most of it on a piano in Room 315 in Leeds Polytechnic, while Kate was teaching at the Art School,” said Westbrook, hence the title. Followers of the UK music scene will probably notice the key role of art schools—open to innovation and art from the 20th Century—in the careers of most of the musicians who after 1960 brought British music to the global forefront. In 1977, there was a momentous meeting between Westbrook’s band and Henry Cow for a live concert and the bandleader was inspired by Dagmar Krause’s vocals, Lindsay Cooper’s bassoon and Georgie Born’s cello: they later joined the band for The Cortège.

In 1980, Westbrook joined John Surman’s band, receiving a commission to write for the Swedish Radio Jazz Orchestra featuring Surman as soloist. Citadel/Room 315 premiered in 1974 in Stockholm: “I wrote most of it on a piano in Room 315 in Leeds Polytechnic, while Kate was teaching at the Art School,” said Westbrook, hence the title. Followers of the UK music scene will probably notice the key role of art schools—open to innovation and art from the 20th Century—in the careers of most of the musicians who after 1960 brought British music to the global forefront. In 1977, there was a momentous meeting between Westbrook’s band and Henry Cow for a live concert and the bandleader was inspired by Dagmar Krause’s vocals, Lindsay Cooper’s bassoon and Georgie Born’s cello: they later joined the band for The Cortège.

Japanese drummer Keiji “George” Otsuka, who was 82 when he died in Tokyo on Mar. 10th, 2020, had a career spanning over 60 years and was known not only for the high caliber of Japanese musicians he employed, but also for all the American and Europeans who hired him when they were in Japan, a list that included saxophonists Richie Beirach, Kenny Kirkland and Hampton Hawes, bassists Reggie Workman and Miroslav Vitous, alto saxophonist Phil Woods and guitarist John Scofield.

Born in Tokyo on Apr. 6th, 1937, Otsuka emerged during the ‘50s and made a name for himself when he joined alto saxophonist Sadao Watanabe’s group in the latter part of the decade. Otsuka’s roots were bos in the early ‘60s, he was influenced by the modal innovations of trumpeter Miles Davis and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane. The ‘60s found Otsuka working as a sideman for saxophonist Hidehiko Matsumo in addition to leading his own trio.

In 1970, Otsuka toured Japan as part of the Four Drums alongside three well-known drummers from the U.S. Jack DeJohnette, Roy Haynes and Mel Lewis. Otsuka kept busy as both a leader and a sideman during the ‘70s and ‘80s. Paris-based WeWantSounds label has reissued his 1975 Bellwood LP Loving You George: The George Otsuka Quintet at Nemo Jazz Inn, a concert with soprano and tenor saxophonist Shozo Sasaki, keyboard player Fumio Karashima, bassist Mitsuaki Furono and percussionist Norio Ohno on Otsuka original “Little Island”, Coltrane’s “Miles’ Mode”, pianist Steve Kuhn’s “Something Everywhere” and singer Minnie Riperton’s 1974 R&B hit “Lovin’ You”. The performance is passionate postbop bordering on fusion at times. “Lovin’ You” is a major surprise: while Riperton’s version was a mellow, ethereal quiet storm ballad, Otsuka’s midtempo interpretation gives the song a funkier, grittier edge. Japanese trumpeter Shunzo Ohno, who spent two years as a sideman for Otsuka during the early ‘70s, recalls, “Although George could not read music well, his ear was spot on. He captured originality, creativity and deep-hearted sensitivity. American jazz artists felt that respect in the ’50s and ’60s; so, in the ’70s, artists like George were burgeoning. And that was a perfect synergy.” Otsuka didn’t live long enough to witness the reissue of Loving You George. Regardless, Ohno is glad that WeWantSounds thought enough of Otsuka to make an album that had been out of print for so long commercially available again. “George’s focus was on the purity of music and the creative energy between musicians,” Ohno observed. “He helped expand the vitality of jazz in Japan.”

Recommended Listening:
- Hampton Hawes—Jazz Session (Columbia, 1968)
- George Otsuka Quintet—Sea Breeze (Union, 1971)
- George Otsuka 5—Go On’ (Three Blind Mice, 1972)
- Jack DeJohnette—Jackesboard (Trio, 1973)
- George Otsuka Quintet—Physical Structure (Columbia, 1976)
- Miroslav Vitous—Guardian Angels (Trio, 1978)
CADILLAC BY MARK KERESMAN

Record labels are as common as blades of grass these days but as any music devotee familiar with the ups and downs of the business will tell you, that commonality is superficial. Some labels end up having a specific impact (sometimes aimed for, sometimes not). Other outfits put a new set of clothing on sounds from the past. And still others focus on styles that mainstream outlets overlooked and even some indie labels—would find anathema—or downright commercial suicide. Cadillac specializes in, mostly but not entirely, styles of jazz too chancy for mainstream concerns and provides a dose of sorts for some of the UK’s—and beyond—jazz makers.

Brief historical context: in the ’60s Columbia issued albums by pianists Denny Zeitlin and Burton Greene; there was even one by iconic free jazz drummer Sunny Murray sadly never released. However, as the decade wore on, the majors showed increasing indifference toward jazz, being made in/of the moment and, as history has shown, musicians knew that if they wanted to proceed with integrity, they’d have to do it themselves. Labels such as Incus and Cadillac sprang forth to do what needed to be done, to document the newest sounds and, in the case of the latter, also show proper respect to older sounds. Cadillac was founded by John Jack and pianist/composer/bandleader Mike Westbrook in 1973. Originally it was a vehicle intended to release the latter’s albums at a time when more pop-oriented/funk-ed up variants of fusion had supplanted both old school and avant sounds as far as most major record companies were concerned. Westbrook and Jack, the latter a salesman for Melodisc, 77 and Esquire labels (all UK indies from the ’40s-50s), saw an opportunity offered by Dame Fortune to build something and ran with it, shaping a boutique label that reflected their eclectic tastes.

Jack was indeed a proverbial larger-than-life character, perhaps the stuff of a future biopic: in the early ’60s he was a roadie for skiffle band The Vipers and in 1963 a promoter who booked a young rhythm and blues quintet called The Rolling Stones into the north London jazz club the Manor House. From 1965-68 Jack managed the original Ronnie Scott’s club when it was based in Chinatown, becoming affectionately known as “the Old Place”, a haunt where one could hear not just jazz—both trad and modern—but rhythm and blues, South African township sounds and poets. Jack was a mercurial presence, a dapper gent that could easily transition from muttered expletives to gentle offers of “What can I do for you, dear boy?”

From UK modernists Ken Colyer, Stan Tracey and Harry Beckett and American firebrands Frank Lowe and David Murray to younger, emerging UK talents like David Murray to younger, emerging UK talents like Harry Beckett and American firebrands Frank Lowe and David Murray to younger, emerging UK talents like Beckett’s Reissues of important UK discs include trumpeter Beckett’s Joy Unlimited from 1974 and currently a best seller of Cadillac’s catalogue. This is a gem; while its fusion aspects date parts of it slightly, Joy Unlimited sounds as if it could’ve been spawned last year: a joy-filled mélange of forward-looking hardbop and a bit of soul-jazz, with concise soloing and persuasive, engaging grooves that are direct yet never pandering to searching for that mythical Wider Audience. The track “Not Just Tomorrow” could sound medium airplay even now (among more enlightened FM outlets) with its loping, pulsating rhythm and heartfelt and sweetly melodic trumpet solo.

Let the words of label honcho Mike Gavin be a summation: “Musical labels are a limitation—Mike Westbrook was co-founder of the label and its first recording artist and his career [which would eventually supplant his involvement with the record label] is a... (CONTINUED ON PAGE 23)
RALPH PETERSON
BY ANDREY HENKIN

Ralph Peterson, a drummer who was part of the Young Lions retro-jazz movement of the ‘80s but also veered outwards and got the ultimate endorsement when he was asked to play alongside Art Blakey in his Jazz Messengers Big Band in 1983 and continued until the drummer’s death in 1990, later returning the favor decades later with The Messenger Legacy band (featuring numerous Blakey alumni), died Mar. 1st at 84 after a long battle with cancer.

Peterson was born May 20th, 1962 in Pleasantville, NJ into a musical family, with his father and grandfather also drummers. He began behind the kit at age five and continued his studies through high school and in the jazz program at Rutgers University. His early work was with Out Of The Blue, Branford Marsalis, Terence Blanchard and others but also David Murray and Craig Harris. As he told our own Russ Musto less than six weeks before his death for a cover feature published in February, “Terence and Donald and David Murray at the same time! Jon Faddis and Henry Threadgill at the same time! Craig Harris and OTB at the same time! It was a blessing, but at the time it almost seemed like a burden or a trap because I could never get all the way down with either camp.”

Over the years, which, unfortunately, included very jazz-transitional problems with drugs and alcohol, Peterson compiled sideman credits with Betty Carter (“...when she was teaching me to play brushes and didn’t want me to sweep, she said, ‘they’re brushes, ain’t they? So paint!’ That opened up the door and the ballad took off”), William Fielder, Walter Davis, Jr., Jon Faddis, James Spaulding, Roy Hargrove, Michele Rosewoman, Don Byron, Charles Lloyd, Craig Handy, Anthony Cox, Uri Caine, Bobby Zankel, Stanley Cowell, Mark Shim, Orrin Evans, Duane Eubanks, Carmen Lundy, Frank Lowe, George Colligan, Jeremy Pelt, Wayne Escoffery, Sean Jones, Melissa Aldana and many others. He also had numerous albums as a leader since the ‘80s for Blue Note, Evidence, Sriracha, Criss Cross and, in the new millennium, his own Onyx Productions.

His precipous work with Blakey – the only time the venerable leader included another drummer in his band—impressed Peterson’s development as he would go on to mentor younger musicians in his own bands, most recently the Gen-Next Big Band, and found The Messenger Legacy band, which released its debut, Onward & Upward (Onyx) in 2020, timed to Blakey’s centennial: 11 original compositions and arrangements by a rotating lineup of 17 players, 14 who were former Messengers. Said Peterson of the project, “Every time I play the drums it is in tribute to Art, but I wanted to do something that goes beyond me, beyond any individual. I wanted to pay tribute in a way that was authentic, genuine, and meaningful not just to a few, but to every person he touched through his music.”

CHRIS BARBER (Apr. 17th, 1930 - Mar. 2nd, 2021) The British trombonist and OBE recipient was crucial in reviving interest in trad-jazz in England in the ’50s first with Ken Colyer and then with bands he led well into the new millennium, making dozens of records for Decca, Storyville, Columbia, Tempo, Pye Nixa, Metronome, Amiga, Marmalade, Polydor, Timeless, Bellaphon, G.H.B. and many other labels and was also important to British and international music history through work with figures who would go on to spawn bands like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Cream. Barber died Mar. 2nd at 90.

MALCOLM CECIL (Jan. 9th, 1937 - Mar. 28th, 2021) The inventor known for his early work with synthesizers and going on to work with an array of rock and pop stars as a collaborator, producer and recording engineer got his start as a bassist in his native England, working with Tony Crombie and Kinsley, Dick Morissiey, Vic Ash and others. Cecil died Mar. 28th at 84.

BUDDY DEPPENSCHMIDT (Feb. 16th, 1936 - Mar. 20th, 2021) The drummer helped usher in the Samba craze of the ’60s via the 1962 Verve album Jazz Samba by Stan Getz/Charlie Byrd, the latter in whose trio he was during the period. Deppenschmidt died Mar. 20th at 85 of complications from COVID-19.


PAUL JACKSON (Mar. 28th, 1947 - Mar. 18, 2021) The electric bassist was best known for membership in Herbie Hancock’s Headhunters, appearing on the band’s eponymous debut and Thrust, plus later Hancock albums like Flood and Man-Child, and continuing with the band post-Hancock, plus work with Eddie Henderson, Azar Lawrence, Stanley Turrentine, Charles Earland, Stomu Yamashita, Bennie Maupin, Bill Summers, Sonny Rollins and others to go along with a handful of albums as a leader, a couple with fellow Headhunter Mike Clark. Jackson died Mar. 18th at 73.

JAMES LEARY III (Jun. 4th, 1946 - March 2021) The bassist put out a handful of records in the ’80s-90s on Blue Collar and Vital (and then LifeForceJazz in 2012) and recorded with Bobby Hutcherson, Hadley Caliman, John Klemmer, George Duke, Earl Hines, Eddie Davis, David Schnitter, Eddie Marshall, John Handy, Harold Land, Gene Harris All Star Big Band. Leary died in March at 75.


FREDDIE REDD (May 29th, 1928 - Mar. 17th, 2021) The pianist was best known for his compositions “Dip and Dandy” and acting in Jack Gelber’s 1959 play about drug-using jazz musicians The Connection, the music for which was released on Blue Note in 1960, one of many albums he made as a leader for Prestige, Metronome, Riverside, Nixa, Futura, Baybridge, Interplay, Uptown, Triloka, Milestone, Bopicity, SteepleChase and, most recently, Bleebo to go along with early sideman dates under Art Farmer, Joe Roland, Gene Ammons, Rollie Ericson, Benny Bailey and Tommy Potter. Redd died Mar. 17th at 92.

DEAN REILLY (Jun. 30th, 1926 - Mar. 9th, 2021) The West Coast-based bassist had credits with Earl Hines, Vince Guaraldi, Mike Dennis, Brew Moore, George Barnes, Carl Tujer, Eddie Duran, Helen Humes and others. Reilly died Mar. 9th at 94.

LEN SKEAT (Feb. 9th, 1937 - Mar. 9th, 2021) The British bassist (and brother to saxophonist Bill) worked with The Hot Club of London, Denny Wright, Don Harper, Eddie Thompson, Bill Watrous, Brian Lomon, Danny Moss, Charly Antolini, Spike Robinson, Harry Allen, George Masso and others. Skeat died Mar. 9th at 84.

FRANK TIRRO (Sep. 20th, 1935 - Mar. 28th, 2021) The music historian and former Dean of the Yale School of Music helped the study of jazz become part of academia, publishing such books as Jazz: A History, Living with Jazz and The Birth of the Cool. Miles Davis and His Associates. Tirro died Mar. 28th at 85.

AKIRA WADA (Aug. 26th, 1956 - Mar. 28th, 2021) The Japanese guitarist and co-founder of Prism, which has had dozens of albums since the ’70s, had his own albums for Warner Bros., TDK and Eastern Gale and sideman credits under Toshiyuki Honda, Yasuko Agawa, Jun Fukamachi and others. Wada died Mar. 28th at 64.

MARK WHITECAGE (Jun. 4th, 1937 - Mar. 8th, 2021) The reedplayer (and husband to predeceased fellow reedplayer Rozanne Levine) came out of the improvisod music scene of his native Connecticut in the late ’60s, first working with Bobby Naughton then going on to credits with Gunter Hampel, Perry Robinson, Jeanne Lee, David Eygges, Mario Povone, Sahel Shariati, John Stell, Nicky Stern, Tony Malaby, Steve Swell, Dominic Duval, Joseph Scannell, Marshall Allen, Anthony Braxton, Jay Rosen, Dom Minasi, Jacques Couris and others, had membership in The Composers Collective, INTERface and The Nu Band and his own or co-led albums since the ’90s on Acoustics, CIMP, Red Toucan, OM and Clean Feed. Whitecage died Mar. 8th at 83.
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**Smashing Humans**

Sana Nagano (577 Records) by Elliott Simon

Smashing Humans, a score of sorts for a coming digital apocalypse, is the debut release from an innovative quintet led by violinist Sana Nagano. The album art features caricatures of the band escaping from a gelatinous dessert that is ready for an assortment of pixelated creatures to eat it. Tunes like "The Other Seven" and "Heavenly Evil Devil" ostensibly reflect the storyline with repetitive catchy hooks, which through anger, noise and seemingly directionless noodling, are magically transformed.

Nagano along with Peter Apfelbaum, here on tenor saxophone, shares an association with vibraphonist Karl Berger and they are muscular, sparkling and resourceful players. They meld timbres to blend into one instrument and play off of each other showcasing prodigious chops. Bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Joe Hertenstein, both well known to the NYC creative music scene, make for a propulsive rhythm section that is so outstanding that they would drive any musician to play at their best. Nagano and Apfelbaum take advantage of this solid support to explore and create a variety of intense new music. Newcomer guitarist Keisuke Matsuno is exceptional and turns opener "Strings and Figures", which arrives almost fully formed, into a band tour de force as he slashes through the composition.

Simple scalar solos traded by Nagano and Apfelbaum develop into a magnificent group voicing dissolving into a sparse landscape on "Humans in Grey", "Chance Music" showcases Hertenstein and the rest of the band's spirituality while "Loud Dinner Wanted" satisfies its title's request with fiery instrumental interplay. Although it may be intentional that "Dark Waw" never finds itself and closer "The Wanted" satisfies its title's request with fiery "Grey", "Chance Music" showcases Hertenstein and the dissolving into a sparse landscape on "Humans in Grey". The album art features caricatures of the band escaping from a gelatinous dessert that is ready for an assortment of pixelated creatures to eat it. Tunes like "The Other Seven" and "Heavenly Evil Devil" ostensibly reflect the storyline with repetitive catchy hooks, which through anger, noise and seemingly directionless noodling, are magically transformed.

Nagano along with Peter Apfelbaum, here on tenor saxophone, shares an association with vibraphonist Karl Berger and they are muscular, sparkling and resourceful players. They meld timbres to blend into one instrument and play off of each other showcasing prodigious chops. Bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Joe Hertenstein, both well known to the NYC creative music scene, make for a propulsive rhythm section that is so outstanding that they would drive any musician to play at their best. Nagano and Apfelbaum take advantage of this solid support to explore and create a variety of intense new music. Newcomer guitarist Keisuke Matsuno is exceptional and turns opener "Strings and Figures", which arrives almost fully formed, into a band tour de force as he slashes through the composition.

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For more information, visit 577records.com. This project live-streams May 1st from Sony Hall at the8bitbigband.com/tickets-songhall.
A Lifeboat (Part I) represents the latest installment of an ongoing project begun in 2020 by trumpeter Michael Sarian and pianist Matthew Putman, following two volumes of Improvisations also released on 577 Records. As with those albums, the music contained here is the spontaneous product of the two musicians' COVID-restricted encounters. Lockdown confined their meetings to Sarian’s makeshift home studio and for Putman that meant relying on a 20-year-old electric keyboard. Their regular get-togethers culminated in 13 cuts, ordered into three chapters, each recorded in a single session over a three-week period last August.

Putman’s tenure in the Telepathic Band alongside Daniel Carter, Federico Ughi, Hilliard Greene and Patrick Holmes makes him well suited to such impromptu music making. His keys furnish the date with a rich reverberant backdrop and a shimming timeless feel. But even within the context of a constant to and fro, he’s mainly cast in the role of accompanist by breathy, lyrical trumpet and flugelhorn. Sometimes reminiscent of Kirk Knuffke or Kenny Wheeler, Sarian largely carries the expressive baggagge, spicing his bright extemporizations with half-valve effects, querulous sighs and thin squeals.

The cover shows the two masked protagonists sitting in a bar and this would be the perfect late night spontaneous product of the two musicians’ COVID-restricted encounters. Lockdown confined their meetings to Sarian’s makeshift home studio and for Putman that meant relying on a 20-year-old electric keyboard. Their regular get-togethers culminated in 13 cuts, ordered into three chapters, each recorded in a single session over a three-week period last August.

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**Magic Dance: The Music of Kenny Barron**
**Greg Abate (Whaling City Sound)**
by Scott Yanow

Saxophonist Greg Abate’s two-CD set Magic Dance is the best type of tribute. Not only is it a straightforward exploration of 14 of Kenny Barron’s compositions, but also it features Barron himself, playing in prime form.

Barron, who turns 78 this year, has been a significant pianist and composer since the early ’60s. His playing has grown in its individuality and power through the years and he has long been a skilled but underrated composer. While his “Voyage” has caught on as a standard, most of his other originals were long overdue to be explored again at length.

Abate, a veteran saxophonist based in New England who is best known on alto, had previously recorded with Barron just one time, for his 1996 album Bop Lives. For the tribute, Abate, Barron, bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Johnathan Blake dig into many of the pianist’s finest songs, which often have accessible melodies along with complex and original chord changes. With the exception of “Voyage”, these are not the type of tunes that show up often at jam sessions.

Abate, who is heard on five different instruments, overdubbed a second horn on five songs (mostly for the melody statements) and on “Innocence” and “Voyage” he is heard as a full five-part horn section. His playing is excellent throughout and his occasional soprano solos (most notably on “Innocence”) make the case for him being ranked as one of the top jazz players on that horn. Other highlights include the catchy “Sunshower”, picturesque “Cook’s Bay”, thoughtful “Rain”, an inventive and exciting arrangement of “Voyage” and every solo played by the ageless pianist.

Magic Dance is one of the finest recent recordings by both Abate and Barron with the tribute not revisiting past triumphs but standing on its own as a superior modern jazz date.

For more information, visit whalingcitysound.com. Barron live-streams May 14th at jazzstandard.com.

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**Da Fé**
**Dan Blake (Sunnyside)**
by Marco Cangiano

Dan Blake, a Brooklyn-based multi-instrumentalist, composer and educator with a wide-ranging resume, has composed a very ambitious work in the midst of the ongoing pandemic and its consequences, drawing inspirations from deeply personal and spiritual experiences. The CD, consisting of nine captivating originals, is a suite with a prologue and an epilogue.

The quartet with pianist Carmen Staaf, bassist Dmitry Ishenko and drummer Jeff Williams is augmented by the numerous keyboards of Leo Genovese, a frequent musical partner of Blake. The musical climate is reminiscent of John Coltrane’s classic quartet both musically and in terms of spiritual quest, with an added postbop flavor. Blake’s overdubbing and alternating between soprano and tenor saxophone is quite effective, much as Genovese’s complementing elegiac piano. Ishenko and Williams handle the rhythmic challenges with gusto.

The CD opens with a dramatic and meditative piano solo, “Prologue—The New Normal”, foreshadowing rather bleak post-pandemic images. The modal and Eastern-inspired “Cry” reflects on the Palestinian people’s plight while delivering an impressive piano solo besides the leader’s soprano.

“Like Fish in Puddles” is inspired by Buddhist poems and is the tune more closely resembling Coltrane’s quartet, particularly the leader’s soprano style and the inevitable piano reference to McCoy Tyner.

“Pain” is a more esoteric and airy piece slowly developing into a dirge. It is inspired by Blake’s recent family losses and features the full range of his tenor floating on a dense carpet of electronic effects provided by Genovese. “The Cliff” sounds loosely based on a Monk-ish theme, with supple drumming in evidence sustaining a repeated riff by overdubbed saxophones and angular piano. Ishenko’s intense solo leaves the listener with the taste for more.

The title track, which translates to “about faith”, delivers a suspenseful yet dramatic atmosphere built once again upon keyboards, twisting soprano and insisting piano chords. Finally, “Epilogue: It Heals Itself” closes on a hopeful note, much like Coltrane’s “After the Rain”. The slow progression develops around three chords and provides the launch pad for a dialogue between the soprano and tenor saxophones on what could be next. Notwithstanding the programmatic intent and noble inspirations, this is music that stands on its own.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com. This project live-streams May 14th at facebook.com/jazzhabitat.

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**The Queen of Cups**
**Lauren Lee (ears&eyes)**
by Jordannah Elizabeth

During the COVID-19 lockdown, composer Lauren Lee began to rehash and reconcept songs meant for her trio, gathering freshly composed repertoire and old songs, which manifest on her third album, The Queen of Cups. This solo vocal and piano album consists of half original music and half reimagined standards that stem from Lee’s intricate imagination and distinct compositional style.

One of the most enticing components is the esoteric title. This mystical tarot card archetype is that of a being who wades deeply within her emotions and flows in the watery depths of her empathic and caring behavioral projections. The Queen of Cups sits on a throne reigning alone, which lends insight into the metamorphosis of trio music into a solo effort. Lee performs her sparse pieces, personal lyrics and unique scrambling technique with confidence and quietly crisp production.

Opener “Cognition” offers rich piano, which rings and sonically grows against voice. Lee does not sing lyrics, but instead to lyrics, to sonically somber melodies. “Up in the Air” features the careful layering of voice, piano playing simple notes and chords in support of the structured juggling of vocal expressions.

Ralph Rainier-Lee Robin’s “If I Should Lose You” is minimal and haunting, Lee accompanying herself with organ. She has created her own lane when it comes to reinterpreting jazz standards, taking the barest elements, the bones of jazz favorites, drawing them into her own world and offering up versions never done before. This is true for Axel Stordahl-Paul Weston-Sammy Cahn’s “I Should Care”, done in a slightly more upbeat interpretation.

Lee creates a postmodern minimalistic musical reality, which invokes yearning to learn more about her inspiration. She seems to have misgivings about making music exactly the way she pleases and there’s couragelessness in the crux of her sparse music.

For more information, visit earsandeyesrecords.com. This project live-streams May 17th at soapboxgallery.org.

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**George Coleman Quintet (Reel to Real)**
**Phil Freeman**

Baltimore’s Left Bank Jazz Society put on shows for over 30 years, beginning in the mid ’60s. A few have been released, including an April 1968 performance by tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson split across two ’60s Verve CDs; a 1972 set by singer Etta Jones, backed by pianist Cedar Walton’s trio; and drummer Roy Brooks’ The Free Slave, recorded in 1970.

George Coleman was part of Brooks’ band on that date. 13 months later – and 50 years ago this month – the tenor saxophonist was back in Baltimore, leading his own quartet with trumpeter Danny Moore, pianist Albert Dailey, bassist Larry Ridley and drummer Harold White. That set of performances is preserved here, on tapes recorded by Left Bank founder and engineer Vernon Lewis.

Coleman was a highly regarded player almost as soon as he emerged out of Memphis in the mid ’50s. He worked with Max Roach, Jimmy Smith, Booker Little and Lee Morgan, then joined Miles Davis’ quintet for a year. He played on Herbie Hancock’s Maiden Voyage and joined Elvin Jones’ band in 1969. His style was gutsy and soulful at times, but always retained the fast, clean articulation of bebop. He never had much use for free playing, always preferring a memorable melody and a strong set of chord changes to keep himself anchored and that’s where he’s still at today at age 86.

Everyone plays at a high level, with Coleman and Moore a perfectly matched frontline and the rhythm section supporting them with subtlety and power. White’s solo on “I Got Rhythm” is a Jones-esque display of explosive energy kept under extraordinary control. But there’s absolutely nothing that sounds like it was recorded in 1971. The setlist is straight from the ’50s: John Lewis’ “Afternoon in Paris”, Clifford Brown’s “Joy Spring” and “Sandu” and versions of the Gershwin’s aforementioned “I Got Rhythm” and Johnny Green-Edward Heyman-Robert Sour-Frank Eyton’s “Body and Soul”. Occasionally, on the latter, Coleman delivered a pitch of intensity nodding to mid ’60s Sonny Rollins, which is rare anywhere near Albert Ayler or Pharoah Sanders territory. This performance is a strange kind of time capsule, a monument to stubborn traditionalism.

For more information, visit cellarslive.com.
Guitarist Roni Ben-Hur has put together a release drawing from many styles while the instrumentalists he recruited are all among the most in demand artists active today: trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, pianist George Cables, bassist Harvie S and drummer Victor Lewis. There is a feeling that it is a working group that has played this music for audiences and nailed everything on the first take, rather than a one-shot studio meeting.

The leader’s originals include “But I Had To Say Goodbye”, a bittersweet ballad, along with the upbeat “Ma’of”, which celebrates the coming of age of his two daughters. Ben-Hur’s inclusion of Elmo Hope’s unjustly obscure bop gem “Something For Kenny” is a nice touch, showcasing his formidable chops along with potent solos by Jensen and Cables. John Hicks’ “After the Morning” is arranged as a lyrical, easygoing jazz waltz for quartet (Cables sits out), with superb improvisations by Jensen and Cables, especially on the second “Ma’of”, which carries much of the load in this playful tune and it is the humor found in many of Monk’s works; the composer himself with sympathetic and talented players: Orrin Evans (piano), Peter Washington (bass) and Joe Farnsworth (drums). The band works from a songbook of well-known standards on which they can take chances. This was Snidero’s first live recording in an over 30-year career and took place on Halloween 2020, in the throes of the pandemic. It was a very welcome opportunity to play before a live audience, which had been missing since the earliest part of the year.

Although Snidero is more of a disciple of Phil Woods than Charlie Parker, this session included a couple of Parker-associated themes, including his own “Now’s The Time” and the ballad “My Old Flame”, which he first recorded in 1947. The former, which is a blues-based riff with typical bebop phrasing, is taken as written by Snidero and the band. Snidero runs through the theme, which is followed by a bass solo packed with a lot of weight. Snidero jumps back in, showing his emotion and exciting technique after which Evans takes a solo filled with dexterity and keyboard coverage. Perhaps it was the unexpected attendance of Parker’s step-daughter Kim at the club that pushed the band to their intense connection to the piece.

For a five-year period earlier in his career, Snidero was in the band that backed Frank Sinatra, through which he gained an appreciation of his song interpretations. When you listen to Snidero’s version of “Ol Man River”, you can hear the Sinatra phrasing in the opening bars that Snidero plays. His solo explorations are expressive and intense. Evans’ interlude is reassuringly compelling, which leads to the reprise of the melody by Snidero. “Idle Moments” was written by Duke Pearson and first appeared as the title track of a 1963 Blue Note LP by guitarist Grant Green. It is a languid, minor-key number Snidero delivers with impeccable taste throughout the long structure and interesting melodic lines.

The penultimate track is the other aforementioned Parker-connected number “My Old Flame”, on which Snidero gives full reign to his ballad prowess. His solo bursts with insight and texture. The release is a welcome vaccination in these uncertain pandemic times.

For more information, visit dottimerecords.com. Ben-Hur live-streams May 22nd at soapboxgallery.org.

Jim Snidero is a technically gifted alto saxophonist who plays with a cool sound and airy vibrato. In this live recording from the Deer Head Inn, Snidero surrounds himself with sympathetic and talented players: Orrin Evans (piano), Peter Washington (bass) and Joe Farnsworth (drums). The band works from a songbook of well-known standards on which they can take chances. This was Snidero’s first live recording in an over 30-year career and took place on Halloween 2020, in the throes of the pandemic. It was a very welcome opportunity to play before a live audience, which had been missing since the earliest part of the year.

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For more information, visit dottimerecords.com.
Solo sessions and duo dates are de rigueur these days, what with COVID-19 calling for solitary confinement and creation. But neither one of these releases actually came about as a product of the pause on gatherings. Instead, each reflects a different facet of formidable bassist Michael Formanek’s complete return to the scene prior to the pandemic. After spending 17 years teaching at the prestigious Peabody Conservatory while channeling additional strengths and ambitions into sideman work, cooperative ventures and three notable leader dates on the ECM imprint, Formanek moved back into the life of the full-time improviser. Over the past several years, since making that transition, his bass has carried significant weight on a pair of albums from guitarist Mary Halvorson’s Code Girl, three releases from collective trio Thumbscrew and a set apiece from his own Elusion Quartet and Very Practical Trio. Along the way, Formanek clearly found time also to bottle and preserve sage wisdom and searching suggestions in the solo format and with a familial duo.

Bass is the lone instrument on Imperfect Measures, but Formanek wasn’t all by his lonesome when he recorded this in 2017. Building the project around the concept of music giving rise to art, he invited illustrator Warren Linn to sketch along with/to his discoveries. Some of Linn’s finalized creations, in turn, helped to finish Formanek’s work, appearing in the CD’s packaging. The music—almost exclusively improvised, with only a couple of sketches or seeds to grow—offers serious thought(s) on time and dimension. The bustling “Quickdraw” holds tension through pace. “On The Skin” subtly nods to tango composer Eduardo Arolas’ “Comme il Faut”. “A Maze” adopts a trembling arco. And “The Stand” works rhythmic and motivic hooks to their fullest. Open to wherever the muse of the moment takes him, Formanek is always seeking out the sound of opportunity in these performances. As restless as it is assured, this program possesses a mesmeric draw.

While self-motivation is at the root of most solo endeavors, a duo declaration—one like Dyads, especially—is less about individual drive than shared experience(s). So with concentric interests and connections nourished and strengthened over time, Formanek and his son, saxophonist/clarinetist Peter, were primed for this pairing. Recorded at the close of 2019, soon after they finished touring, this album speaks directly to lives and minds intertwined. From the very beginning, with the mysterious-turned-grooving “Two, Not One”, things just click. And no matter where they go from there—further left, or right, or straight down a rabbit hole—these men are in sync. There’s rooted back-and-forth talk on “After You”, material and scenic suggestions in “The Woods”, tempestuous streaks storming through “Hurricane” unsettled (and unsettling) thoughts forwarded in “Hoarse Syrinx” and a blend of order and impulse behind “That Was Then”. Genes may have a little something to do with the magic here, but don’t discount a tremendous work ethic and big, developed ears. It’s all in the family.

For more information, visit intaktrec.ch and outofyourheadrecords.com. Michael Formanek live-streams solo May 10th at soapboxgallery.org.
For protein performer, saxophonist and recording artist Jeff Coffin, creative juices seem to flow unimpeded. Many who are familiar with the saxophonist/reedplayer have come to that realization without actually hearing any of his projects, only taking into account his Grammy-garnering 14-year tenure with Bela Fleck and The Flecktones and stentorian contributions in studios and stadiums with Dave Matthews Band.

But Coffin’s rich discography, containing more than 15 albums under his own name or as a co-leader, attests to how he constantly channels his imagination into many and varied environments. As a conversationalist and sharp-eyed collaborator he’s particularly suited to duo settings, made clear most recently, in 2018, with the release of recorded encounters with percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani (Flight) and drummer Roy “Futureman” Wooten (The Moment of Now). Moving into the present, a pair of dissimilar duo albums, arriving less than a month apart on Coffin’s Ear Up imprint, furthers that line of thinking.

Symbiosis, Coffin’s meet-up with beat-box saxophone stylist Derek Brown, presents seven originals. All but one of the performances were recorded live without overdubbing, with each man covering one saxophone per track and an exuberated sensibility carries across this energetic endeavor. The two musicians often feel like three or four, with popping and slap-tongued articulations, key-clanked percussion and saxophone basslines adding a notable rhythmic foundation. Coffin carries his tenor with swaggering soul and Brown alternates between tenor and baritone, keeping it fun and funky from the bottom up. Only the closer—“Somewhere I Can’t Recall”, presenting with added colors and a cool-headed disposition—strays a bit in character. With intriguing riffs and grounding grooves underscoring some sly and raucous blowing, this synergistic partnership is largely about hearty partying.

Symbiosis finds Coffin playing to the rafters, Let It Shine is all about eyeing the room and exploring the atmosphere that surrounds it. A much more nuanced set than the lively blow-down with Brown, this collaboration with genre-defying cellist Helen Gillet stretches into many a different corner. A blend of soprano saxophone and arco cello lines lends a mournful quality to “The Sun Never Says”. The two-act “Lazy Drag Jig” moves from understated hineness to prance-and-dance mode with style. The wistful “Sometimes Springtime” puts Gillet’s lyric writing and vocals in the spotlight. And “Lampl”, with its entrancing five-plus-six feel and Mediterranean mien, is absolutely alluring. With the exception of Ernst Reijseger’s elegiac “Do You Still” and Gillet’s mood-shifting “Unzen”, all of the music stems from Coffin’s pen and pure heart. Wooten drops in as a guest, adding cajon on the 10 tracks, but his contributions don’t alter the basic nature and chemistry of those cuts or the project on the whole. Embracing the idea of layering on many of these pieces and offering unobscured grace when they go au naturel, Coffin and Gillet, left to their own devices, create one beauty after another.

For more information, visit earuprecords.com
Wherever You Roam (The Music of Bob Dylan – Vol. 3) Absolutely Sweet Marie (Tiger Moon)  
by John Pietaro

The Berliners collectively known as Absolutely Sweet Marie, named for Bob Dylan’s song from the deliciously notorious Blonde on Blonde album, are at it again. Thankfully. The quartet, all devotees to Dylan (who turns 80 this month), are free jazz musicians and thinkers who delight in reconstructing the melodies of the master folk poet, reimagining them within the scope of a unique lineup of brass, reeds and drums. Though their first two volumes dedicated to this music seemed to cover most of the big Dylan classics, this current title includes enough to keep even casual fans interested, but, remember, this is far from a cover band. Trumpeter Steffen Faul and tenor saxophonist Alexander Beierbach take the lead much of the way through while trombonist Matthias Müller gravitates between dancing basslines, harmonies and significant solos and drummer Max Andrzejewski thobs, pulsatates and ignites the atmosphere.

A noted Dylan title, “The Mighty Quinn” (aka “Quinn the Eskimo”), a 1968 hit for Manfred Mann, is presented as if poured from a Salvation Army band sneaking hip into an otherwise droll job. Faul has the very recognizable melody, cutting through chops-laden drumming and harsh, new chord voicings. Among the other fascinating cuts is “New Morning” (originally on Dylan’s 1970 album of the same name), which swings roughly in a teasingly harmolodic manner. Müller’s free sections, particularly in contrast to the hymn-like playing of the other horns, will absolutely lure you in. And Beierbach’s rubato feature on “Nettie Moore” (from Modern Times, 2006) carries so much urgency, the ear is reminded of David Murray at his most heartfelt. More so, he captures the sound of the song’s original loss and empty wandering. And now for something completely different: “The Times They Are a-Changing”, vital, wise, acoustic Dylan of 1964 is transformed into a simmering jazz waltz, its melody turned inside out by expansive, ever shifting three-part harmonies and then splintered into fragments defined by Andrzejewski’s jagged, free improvisations. Müller takes the only solo, backed by Faul, with a rapid incendiary drumming and the overall effect is an album, which soothes as much as it stirs.

For more information, visit sunnysiderecords.com

Sometime Ago
Meredith d’Ambrosio (Sunnyside)  
by Geenge Kamber

“I Wished On The Moon” was definitively recorded in 1935 by Billie Holiday. Meredith d’Ambrosio, who turned 80 this year, reprises the Ralph Rainger-Dorothy Parker song here and her version couldn’t be more different. D’Ambrosio, with the exemplary trio of Randy Halberstadt (piano), Daryl Johns (bass) and Steve Johns (drums), takes it at a similar heartbeat tempo to Holiday’s version. However, her vocal approach is softer, bringing a wisful feel to the lyrics while her unique tone and timbre are as smooth as velvet or suede, her inflections as soft as a powder puff.

The title track, by Song Mihanovich, is a slow ballad, the singer’s wisful regrets shadowed by Don Slicker’s flugelhorn. D’Ambrosio’s voice throughout combines the fragility of a Chet Baker with the perspicacity of a Mabel Mercer. She is also a fine lyricist-composer. On “Feast Your Eyes”, a Halberstadt tune, she sardonically catalogues a decadent buffet of extravagant morsels that distract a handsome “Adonis”: “If only he would look my way...all he sees is food.” “My Open Heart”, another Halberstadt tune, is a pure expression of longing: “I come to you with an open heart, my open heart”.

For more information, visit nobusinessrecords.com

DROP THE NEEDLE

Steadfast (Solo Piano)
John Hicks (Strata East-Pure Pleasure)  
by Ken Dryden

John Hicks flew under the radar of many jazz listeners, though the pianist built an extensive, wide-ranging discography as a sideman and leader during a career that lasted over four decades until his sudden death 15 years ago this month at 64. One of two LPs that Hicks recorded in 1975, both made for Strata-East, this was his leader debut. It has been sporadically reissued since the label ceased operations, most recently as this UK LP.

While most of Hicks’ recordings were in small group settings, he made a number of solo piano albums. Steadfast finds him at the top of his game, with an excellent instrument and engineer in a London studio. The setlist seems very spontaneous, as the Whys is playing what comes to mind for his own enjoyment, drawing from decades-old standards, time-tested jazz works and his own rewarding originals.

Even this early in his career, Hicks consistently finds new approaches to familiar works. This disc, for example, seems barely to pause before moving on to the next song, as if he were making a direct-to-disc LP. This type of playing demands repeated hearing to catch the nuances of each selection. Hicks’ joyful “One For John Mixon” is a masterful hop vehicle displaying his inventiveness. His approach to Billy Strayhorn’s “Lush Life” removes it from its typical maudlin setting, retaining the essence of its melody but at a faster tempo with plenty of added flourishes. Almost immediately, he segues into an inventive rendition of Clare Fischer’s Latin gem “Pensativa”, with his dazzling left hand working overtime. His brooding postbop original title track opens the second side, leading into several lyrical ballad interpretations, highlighted by a delicate, swinging take of Duke Ellington’s “In A Sentimental Mood” and understated exploration of Mal Waldron’s “Soul Eyes”.

The warmth of this 180-gram LP is formidable, with the bracing the analog recording quality that have often marred 21st Century high-end records. Additionally, Pure Pleasure earlier reissued Hells Bells, a trio date that Hicks also recorded for Strata-East on the same day as Steadfast.

For more information, visit purepleasurerecords.com
Ballin and Baline—a similarity that led singer Yaala Ballin to make this new CD as she researched a possible ancestral connection. Irving Berlin, born Israel Baline on May 11th, 1888, went on to become a quintessential American songwriter with an output exceeding 1,200 tunes. He was essentially a melodist, with the ability to tell stories that deeply touched hearts. With Ballin, over 13 tracks of familiar works, the numbers don’t so much pull heartstrings but are carried by solid musicality. Her phrasing and vocal dynamics are polished and she is aided by a trio who add immeasurably to the final result. First among them is bassist Ari Roland, who injects amazing energy, creativity and presence. His bowing on “Blue Skies” is perfection; this cut is one of the best on the album, its light swing working well with the tune that’s famously written in a minor key, contrary to its upbeat lyric. Ballin’s slightly accented delivery (she’s originally from Israel) is charming, her vocal tone clear and strong. She handles swing and trad ballads, such as “They Say That Falling in Love Is Wonderful” and “All Alone” equally well. It’s on the latter that she does add emotion to technique. Jazz arrangements, by definition, often run in contrast to traditional popular interpretations and this CD is no exception. Adding a samba beat, for instance, to “Say It Isn’t So” works well with the number, even though it’s usually sung as a torch song. Bookending the tracks are “It’s a Lovely Day” and “Cheek to Cheek”, the two swingiest numbers, both buoyant and cheery. Throughout guitarist Chris Flory and pianist Michael Kanan exceed roles as mere accompanists. Their technical and artistic mastery are as important to the final product as Ballin’s vocals. This is a completely enjoyable tribute to Berlin, whose popularity justly never seems to fade.

For more information, visit steeplechase.dk

The West Coast has always gotten the short shrift, respect-wise, when it comes to jazz and improvised music, despite the fact that many of the greatest musicians, from Charles Mingus to Eric Dolphy to Dexter Gordon, hail from California: Los Angeles, to be exact. When multi-instrumentalist Vinny Golia migrated from New York in the late ‘70s, he helped create a vibrant scene that continues to thrive even today. A key contributor to that scene is slide trombone virtuoso Michael Vlatkovich, who turns 70 this month and whose latest effort is a standout representative of the creative music scene in L.A.

This may be Vlatkovich’s most accessible album to date. One can hear the influence of Mingus peering over the transom and this assemblage—Greg Zilboorg and Louis Lopez (trumpets), Bill Plake and Andrew Pask (saxophones), Wayne Peet (keyboards), Dominic Genova (bass) and Ken Park (drums)—is definitely up to the task. Vlatkovich himself is criminally underrated in the mainstream jazz press. He’s got a wonderful personal sound and singular approach to improvisation. On the opener, “Mr. 60”, the listener is instantly drawn to that brawny timbre and to the rich and woody bass commentary. The trombonist also has a wicked sense of humor, most evident on clever titles like “Don’t Know What You’ve Lost Until It’s Gone”, which also illustrates killer solos from trumpet and baritone saxophone. The reeds get a thorough workout and a chance to shine in wonderfully off-kilter fashion on “Bob, The Fish That Discovered Water”, which contains stellar ensemble writing as well.

Another highlight comes on “Nursing Home Fashion Show”, a sumptuous duo feature for piano and trombone and classic example of deep simpatico. There is an underlying current of the blues throughout the session, especially on the numerically titled, “011…923”, which showcases a swaggering plunger-mute essay and an equally astonishing bass retort. Also noteworthy is “I’ll Show Him Who He Thinks We Are”, spotlighting a relentlessly manic alto solo from Pask, who conjured up Dolphy in mesmerizing fashion. These jazz cats take a back seat to no one regardless of geography.

For more information, visit pfmentum.com

Yaala Ballin (SteepleChase Lookout)
by Marilyn Lester

Michael Vlatkovich (pfMENTUM)
by Robert Bush

Lauren Lee
The Queen of Cups
available 4/30 via ears and eyes records
http://earsandeyesrecords.bandcamp.com

Record Release Concert Livestream
via Soapbox Gallery
Monday May 17 8pm
http://soapboxgallery.org

Your Gift To The Jazz Foundation Provides Emergency Support For Basic Needs To Our Beloved Community of Jazz and Blues Musicians.

Stanley Cowell could be described as an unsung hero in the sense that while he was revered in the music community, he did not have nor did he seek the fame of his contemporaries. Though he won many awards and accolades during his lifetime, he was really a musician’s musician judging by the caliber of leaders like Rhasaan Roland Kirk, Max Roach, Bobby Hutcherson, Marion Brown and Harold Land who drew upon his services. The thing that his wife Sylvia Cowell drew to this reviewer’s attention on his passing last December was his role as a father and husband. Cowell, as attested to by his daughter Sunny, took each of his roles seriously and found a way to balance a deep commitment to exploring his chosen musical instrument with an equal commitment to his family, his teaching and to social justice. Listening to and researching this pair of remastered LPs, this reviewer was struck by the quality of Cowell’s relationships with his family, his fellow musicians and his students.

*Musa - Ancestral Streams* was Cowell’s first solo piano album. The word Musa means “sacred song from the water” in Arabic and other languages. The album is perhaps conceived as an homage to the history of the music from which it is drawn. Released by his own record company Strata-East in 1974, this gorgeous album is dedicated to his father, Stanley R. Cowell, Sr. “His encouragement and the opportunities he provided for my musical/spiritual growth I shall always remember.”

Those opportunities included the chance to meet and play for Art Tatum when he was six at the motel that his father owned. Cowell was born in Toledo, Ohio 80 years ago this month on May 5th. It was a rare thing in those days to have a Black-owned business. Many musicians frequented the motel because of segregation, allowing the younger Cowell to see the musicians and their lifestyle. Trained as a classical pianist by day at the University of Michigan, Cowell spent his nights allowing the younger Cowell to see the musicians and the inner workings of a club. As soon as he was done with his studies, Cowell set off for New York, hoping to play with his idols.

It was a relationship that trumpeter Charles Tolliver described as “an instant bond like no other”, a friendship of 53 years that began at a rehearsal for Tolliver described as “an instant bond like no other”, a friendship of 53 years that began at a rehearsal for Tolliver’s quartet sometime in the early 1970s. Together, the trio was struck by the quality of Cowell’s relationships with his family, his fellow musicians and his students.

*Musa - Ancestral Streams* was Cowell’s most admired composition, one he returned to many times and which has also been covered by many musicians and sampled by hip-hop artists like Notorious B.I.G. “Layla Joy” was the oldest composition on this side and far more abstract than any of the other pieces.

Opening “Absolutions” has a definite masculine tone, with the melody played sturdily in the bass clef. It could be a victory march or a Black man striding towards freedom. Coming of age in the ‘70s, Cowell was influenced by the struggles against the social injustices of the time. “Prayer For Peace”, in contradiction to its title, seems to convey more of the turmoil of war than the tranquility of peace, strangely enough. The final composition on the A-side is unnerving short at 2:45. Entitled “Emil Danenberg”, from *The Illusion Suite*, it is the oldest composition on this side and far more abstract than any of the other pieces.

“Departures II” is the title of Cowell’s second solo piano album, released in 1976. The album was remastered and released last December was his role as a father and husband. Cowell, as attested to by his daughter Sunny, took each of his roles seriously and found a way to balance a deep commitment to exploring his chosen musical instrument with an equal commitment to his family, his teaching and to social justice. Listening to and researching this pair of remastered LPs, this reviewer was struck by the quality of Cowell’s relationships with his family, his fellow musicians and his students.

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These albums illuminate the fascinating evolution and virtuosity of two related small groups with roots in Eastern Europe, each with an eclectic vision. The trio album, *Cryptic Scattered Images of Time Forgotten*, features the outstanding piano work of Stevan Kovac’s Tickmayer (also known as “Istvan” instead of “Stevan”), reed player Istvan Grocso (who turns 65 this month) and drummer Szilveszter Miklos. All three perform also the Grocso Collective Special 5 ‘*Do Not Slam The Door!’ with bassists Robert Benko and Ernő Hock and guest saxophonist Ken Vandermark.

Although sporting similar personnel, the two recordings are successful and gripping in their own ways. With a strong musical background in classical music, free jazz and even rock and a ticklish sense of humor, Tickmayer leads the trio through a smorgasbord of colors and inventive devices, relying on shifts in rhythm, melding genres and strong solos from the group with disparate musical elements. The results are uniquely appealing, sucking the listener into a world that shifts from radical ambient structures to fusion to wildly expressive piano improvisations, colored strongly by the pianist’s writing, which keeps the trio deliciously off-balance. The contrasts are demanding and constant, including the dark, brooding, ponderous soprano of Grocso. But whether it is the mysterious deep sounds of opener “The Wizard Garden”, two-handed pounding of the piano with the creative lines from the saxophone on catchy, toe-tapping “Different Divisions and Rags” or “Simbad Waltz”, with its continually morphing explorations, the trio delights in its entirely original way. The final track, “Trash Tango”, fully expresses the import of this group. It elicits laughter from the audience as it rolls a tango with crashing drums, complex silly snippets, hardcore pianism and hilarious shifts in time.

“Do Not Slam The Door” is compelling, but it is led by and showcases Grocso, who shines throughout with his original sounds on flute, alto and tenor saxophones and clarinet and, critically, features Vandermark throughout. The opening “Parallel Phenomenon” sets the tone, with Vandermark and Grocso going head-to-head, a cappella style, with the latter impressive in his sparring with the great Chicago free improviser. As with *Cryptic Scattered Images of Time Forgotten*, there are constant leaps of genre, changing instrumentation and the group seems much larger than it is. On “Curtain”, the saxophones let loose with wildly exciting solos after the opening hardbop-influenced opening salvo, anchored by freestyle drumming. Contrast this with the following piece, the elegiac, atmospheric, but edgy “Only You Can Hear It”, with Tickmayer plucking the piano inside with a strong bass underpinning. The pieces are diverse and demanding and along the way there are excellent contributions by every member of the band, from expressionist vocalizations to a range of weird sounds, what is a serious and convincing effort. The Grocso Collective Special 5 deserves greater recognition on this side of the Atlantic and perhaps the addition of Vandermark on this recording will entice some to sample this very fine album.

For more information, visit bmcrecords.hu

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**Musa - Ancestral Streams**

**Stanley Cowell (Strata-East - Pure Pleasure)**

**Such Great Friends**

**Stanley Cowell in His Own Words (Strata-East - Pure Pleasure)**

by Monique Ngozi Nri

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**Cryptic Scattered Images of Time Forgotten**

**Trio Kontraszt (BMC Records)**

**Do Not Slam The Door!**

**Grocso Collective (Strata-East - Pure Pleasure)**

by Ken Vandermark

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**These albums illuminate the fascinating evolution and virtuosity of two related small groups with roots in Eastern Europe, each with an eclectic vision. The trio album, *Cryptic Scattered Images of Time Forgotten*, features the outstanding piano work of Stevan Kovac’s Tickmayer (also known as “Istvan” instead of “Stevan”), reed player Istvan Grocso (who turns 65 this month) and drummer Szilveszter Miklos. All three perform also the Grocso Collective Special 5 ‘*Do Not Slam The Door!*’ with bassists Robert Benko and Ernő Hock and guest saxophonist Ken Vandermark.**
Liuas Mockūnas is a Lithuanian reed player, composer and improviser who, over the past 20 years, has built up an impressive discography, with international collaborations including duets with Marc Ducret, Barry Guy and William Hooker and groups with Vladimir Tarasov, Vychaev嵩 Ganelin and Raymond Strid. These two LPs, recorded at Improdromenija (Improdimension), a Vilnius concert series, extend that documentation. Mockūnas, who turns 45 this month, may not be well known outside his native land, but he sounds perfectly at home with some of the world’s most accomplished improvisers.

Improdimensions, duets with Catalan pianist Agustí Fernández, comes from two different editions of the titular series, “Improdimension I” from December 2019, “Improdimension II” from October 2018, each side in three segments. “Improdimension I” begins with Mockūnas on soprano in a remarkable display of close listening, the saxophonist and pianist mirroring one another’s phrasing in a freewheeling, almost aphoristic, improvisational exchange, suggesting a classical modelling and structure. The second episode takes the same attunement into the realm of sound exploration, the saxophonist initiating with a mad honking of metallic ducks, eventually drawing percussive punctuations of prepared piano. The segment eventually gives rise to individual flights, Mockūnas exploring rapid multiplihonic runs that have their own character, followed by Fernández’ forceful two-handed chromatic fantasy. When Mockūnas switches to tenor for the third segment, he shows rare discretion, emphasizing subtle distinctions in attack and tone production as well as a strange bass range. The musicians are in almost perfect lock-step, brilliantly negotiating a blank manuscript that bridges third stream and free improvisation.

The earlier “Improdimension II” opens with a spacious reverie with Fernández moving between keyboard and strings, eventually turning to high-pitched, sliding sounds as Mockūnas enters playing his secret weapon, a contrabass clarinet he mines for complex squawks and wavering tones around the depths of the human hearing range. The middle segment is a piano solo, a powerful and characteristic Fernández invention with a broad sweep from chromatic flurries through bass rumbles and high-register tremolos, ultimately arriving at a pensive ballad. The final segment, a tour de force, has Mockūnas opening with a solo passage of contrabass clarinet in which his ability to create seemingly independent parts adds a hallucinatory element to this potent brew, which is further extended when Fernández inserts more zither-like runs inside Mockūnas’ lines.

NOX presents Mockūnas in a classic quartet formation, collectively improvising with trumpeter Nate Wooley, English bassist Guy and the veteran Lithuanian drummer Arkadijus Gotesmanas. Running long “Multa Dies” assembles itself gradually, with Mockūnas on an emotionally taut soprano introducing brief phrases with Wooley as Guy throws off decorative runs. The first phase that hints at the group’s power is a dialogue between Wooley and Mockūnas consisting of alternating high-pitched squeaks and low-lying nasal clarinet, in the evolving sonic textures of the piece.

“Multa Nox” is as subtle as collective improvisation can be, at times a delicate reverie that seems to be heard through quicksilver bass, at once slow and resonant with sudden delicate flights into the upper registers. As Wooley moves from muted to open trumpet and Mockūnas explores high harmonics on his contrabass clarinet, creating a kind of bass whistling. As the music gradually grows in intensity, Gotesmanas adds rapid snare punctuations before it turns to a slow, pitch-bending passage of trumpet with some bass mirroring, finally concluding in a kind of dour lullaby of trumpet, contrabass clarinet rumbles and bowed bass harmonics. The concluding “Multa Lux” is hyper free jazz, with constantly shifting voices cascading over one another, including Wooley’s damp-air whistles and Mockūnas’ bizarre bass register on tenor. It’s another masterful study in collectivized movement, with constantly changing individual inputs from the musicians somehow forming a continuous tapestry of sounds.

W

With the knowledge that two strokes Keith Jarrett (who turns 76 this month) suffered in 2018 have made it likely he’ll never play piano in public again, it’s tempting to hear the two-CD Budapest Concert album as a capstone. If this is indeed the last new Jarrett album we’ll hear—recorded in 2016, it’s actually an archival release—then it’s by default the former, but it’s the latter only in the sense that his extensive and substantial series of live, improvised concerts are, each and every one, a summation of all the things that have made him the musician he is, heard in that moment.

Within the world of free improvisation, Jarrett’s career is singular both for the mass appeal of his playing and the aesthetic of a focus on order he brings to the keyboard. That method, creating spontaneous material and shaping it into clear forms and structures, is the reason why he has sold millions of copies of completely free albums like the Köln Concert. It is as profound a way to make music as any other approach to free playing and it has its own unique dangers.

Budapest Concert, like the rest of his late period improvised albums, is very different than Köln Concert, a series of shorter pieces that go through a variety of moods and models, rather than the extended explorations and vamps of the earlier album. It’s also as fine a concert album as he’s produced. His technique is not as pristine as it was last century—there are some passages where his fingers muddle his thoughts—and on a couple tracks, like “Part X” (every original title is generic), he spends too much time on a banal sequence of chords. The rewards, however, are both frequent and tremendous. There’s plenty of his driving, soulful rhythms—Jarrett has a technique that swings-est modern jazz musicians—and there’s a substantial focus on spontaneous ballads, which are, in a word, exquisite. On tracks like “Part V”, which opens Disc 2, he pulls together harmonies and melody that match the finest songwriters in the Great American Songbook. The way he shreds dynamics and shapes phases is so intuitive and logical that it seems he’s lived with these tunes for decades, even though he’s making them up on the spot. Which in a way he has; each of these pieces is deeply communicative and seems to get at the essence of Jarrett’s musical thinking and even being.

The large-scale pace and shape of the concert is also superb, another feature of Jarrett’s masterful improvising; he’s thinking in the moment while also keeping track of the overall direction across 90 minutes. “Part X”, one of the relatively weaker tracks, is the last of the regular recital, then Jarrett returns for four encores: a ballad, a blues and luscious and heartbreaking readings of “It’s a Lonesome Old Town” and “Answer Me”.

For more information, visit ecnrecords.com

D

Doug Raney, who died five years ago this month at only 59, was a fluent bop-based guitarist with a cool sound who sounded relaxed even when playing double-time runs over rapid tempos. The son of guitarist Jimmy Raney, the scion had a similar style as his father with perhaps a slightly darker tone. He had such a clear singing sound that it is difficult to believe that he started out as a teenagers playing rock.

Raney had switched to jazz by the time he worked with pianist Al Haig in 1974 when he was 18. Three years later he toured Europe with his father as a duo and soon had permanently moved to Copenhagen. Raney had a long-time association with the SteepleChase label, appearing on many records as a sideman. The liner notes for this newly reissued LP say that Something’s Up was his 11th album for the label as a leader, there would be seven more and each was consistently rewarding.

For this set from February 1988, the then-31-year-old guitarist teams up with his regular pianist of the time Ben Besiakov, another Dane in bassist Jesper Lundgaard and drummer Billy Hart. Raney is the main soloist although Besiakov (who sometimes recalls early Herbie Hancock and Wynton Kelly) makes the most of his solo space. While mostly found in a supportive role, Lundgaard and Hart also have a few short solos.

The quartet performs Raney’s augmented medium-tempo minor blues title track (which has many creative choruses from the guitarist), an extended version of Irene Higginbotham-Ervin’s “Nobody Else But Me” and a pair of extended versions of Billy Strayhorn’s “Upper Manhattan Medical Hospital” and “Hammerstein’s “Nobody Else But Me” and a pair of driving Raney originals: “Speedy Recovery” and “Vicious Drives”. Their playing fits into the mainstream of hardbop yet never sounds predictable with the guitarist constantly pushing himself, particularly during the title track and “Vicious Drives”.

Something’s Up is an excellent place to start in exploring the musical talents of Doug Raney.

For more information, visit steeclechasedk

Nate Wooley, Liudas Mockūnas, Barry Guy, Arkadijus Gotesmanas (NoBusiness)

by Stuart Broomer

Improdimensions

Agusti Fernández/Liudas Mockūnas (NoBusiness)

Something’s Up

Doug Raney (SteepleChase)

Something’s Up

Dug Raney (SteepleChase)

by Scott Yanow

For more information, visit nobusinessrecords.com

For more information, visit steeclechasedk

THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD | MAY 2021

21
Like others of the generation who fed into what Gunther Schuller would call “Third Stream”, Eric Dolphy was frustrated during his all-too-short life that, by virtue of skin color, he was excluded from a career as a composer. He did, however, leave a small but potent body of work, which, occasionally, not often enough, gets visited by musicians attuned to his labyrinthine themes.

Italian reedplayer Marco Colonna and British pianist Alexander Hawkins (who turns 40 this month) delve into what the master left behind on Dolphy Underlined, a set of nine solos and duets ruminating on the familiar themes. They make for a wonderfully intuitive duo—the way they slide in and out of “Out to Lunch” is nothing short of gorgeous. It’s fascinating to hear Hawkins shift from chordal accompaniment (with variations) to mirroring the saxophone lines, or more precisely mirroring the feel of the saxophone, in “Something Sweet, Something Tender”, approximating the glissandi and semi-tones of the horn, suggesting things of which the piano is incapable. In a solo take on “Gazzelloni”, Hawkins finds some unexpected hints of ragtime and barrelhouse without painting the tune as a throwback. And Colonna recalls Dolphy’s fine solo bass clarinet excursions into “God Bless the Child” with his own reverently personal rendition. It’s not at all difficult to project an aching nostalgia onto their lovingly played renditions.

There’s no way of knowing what kind of composer Dolphy might have become had time and diabetes allowed, but the insightful and intuitive compositions on Hawkins’ Togetherness Music could be taken as grist for the imagination. The set of 6 pieces for 16 musicians—including 16-string harpist (viola) and Louise McMonagle (cello) and Marianne Saram (violin), Marie Schreer (violin), Stephen Upshaw (electronics), Benedict Taylor (viola), Hannah Marshall (cello) and The Riot Ensemble: Mandhira de Silva (guitar), Rich Frazier (guitar), Sean Conly (drums), Alex Darrack (drums), Eivind Opsvik (sax), Theo Bleckmann (tenor sax), Rachel Musson (flute, tenor saxophone), Percy Lee (tenor saxophone), Mutima Kangar (vibraphone), Mutmainna Kanan (vibraphone), Adam Pascal (bass clarinet), Cezar Van Severen (clarinet), Eliza Ehrlich (percussion), Hannah Marshall (cello), Stephen Upshaw (viola), Louise McMonagle (cello) and Marianne Schofield (bass)—is wonderfully well structured, plenty of open space without devolving into chaos. The opening composition seems to call the featured soloist out from its very title. “Indistinguishable From Magic” is, like Duke Ellington’s “Concerto for Cootie”, a feature not so much for a particular instrument as for its player, in this instance countryman Evan Parker (violin) and his, late saxophonist David S. Ware, multi-instrumentalist Cooper-Moore (then known as Gene Ashton), bassist Chris Amberger, drummer Tom Bruno and others lived together at 501 Canal Street, where they performed their own music and allowed others to play as well. Braufman claims that 501 Canal was the site of one of David Murray’s earliest New York performances.

In addition to making his own album, Valley of Search, which was released on India Navigation in 1975 and reissued in 2018, he performed on Cecil McBee’s Mutima, Carla Bley’s Musique Mécanique and William Hooker’s Brighter Lights and Lifelines. But he disappeared in the ‘80s, abandoning the East Coast for Salt Lake City.

The Fire Still Burns was inspired by the warm reception the Valley of Search reissue was given. Braufman reunited with Cooper-Moore and tenor saxophonist James Brandon Lewis for the first time the latter pair have recorded together since 2016, Leaps in Leicester, for Clean Feed. It’s a stunning 10-minute vehicle for the unmistakable sound of his saxophone. A couple of densities for strings follow before Hawkins Finally comes out swinging on “Leaving the Classroom of a Beloved Teacher” (he plays before Hawkins finally comes out swinging on “Leaving the Classroom of a Beloved Teacher” (he plays before that, but here he gives himself the spotlight). A serenity follows under the unlikely title “Eстатик Baobabs” and the album closes with “Sunrise”. The theme title is “Optimism of the Will”. This isn’t Hawkins’ first outing as a leader (do not miss his 2017 quartet with vocalist Elaine Mitchener, also on Intakt), but it’s his first with a band this big and he manages exceedingly well.

Hawkins also, of course, has done plenty of work as a sideman and bandmember (of particular note in his organ playing with the trio Decoy). Most recently, he can be heard in an expansive double-CD set led by guitarist Karl Evangelista. The up-and-comer put together an impressive ensemble for the project, with Hawkins, British saxophonist Trevor Watts and South African drummer Louis Moholo-Moholo in what (as Evangelista points out in his liner notes) may be the first time the latter pair have recorded together since the ‘80s. It’s a mostly free session, with strong and enjoyable extrapolations behind him. The pianist launches the next piece, “Morning Bazaar”, solo and when the band comes in, the groove and the uplifting, praise-the-sun melody recall the kind of rocking swing in which Kamasi Washington’s groups specialize. Braufman switches to flute, an instrument on which he’s extremely skilled.

The entire album shifts back and forth between gospel-flavored soul jazz (“Along Again”, “City Limits”), and numerous free pieces ("No Floor No Ceiling", "Creation"). Braufman and Lewis are an excellent team, the vast difference in their ages rendered trivial by their intuitive musical communication and Cooper-Moore, Filiano and Drury never let up. This is a serious, thoughtful artistic statement.

For more information, visit fsrecords.net, intaktrec.ch and astralspiritrecords.com
INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

TNYCJR: How have you been affected by the pandemic? I know you’ve been leading the Louis Armstrong Legacy Jazz Jam at Flushing Town Hall. You told me it’s been virtual for a while, but you’re hoping to go back into the hall.

CS: It’s been a very interesting ride for me. First of all, I did get COVID— at the end of March last year and I had it through April and May. So I stayed home and when I got tested I had antibodies. I felt a little better by June. And then all year I had long-haul COVID, all kinds of stuff. I’m feeling much better just this month. As soon as I could, some of the parents of students I teach urged me to go virtual. I was reluctant, but then I tried it and found that for certain age groups it really worked well. I’ve resumed lessons in person with a few families, but most are still virtual.

And I started back with the Town Hall again, as a virtual concert rather than a jam session. I didn’t realize it would work so well virtually. In fact, we expanded our audience worldwide. We have people from Italy, New Zealand and Australia sending in files they do at home, impromptu recordings. So it’s like a jam in that sense, but we don’t play together.

(ENCORE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

left, thinking the concert was over. By the second interval it was really getting late and a lot more people left, thinking this must surely be the end. We completed the concert to a small scattering of die-hards… In fact we had given the Jazz Festival rather more than it bargained for… Next morning the organizers wouldn’t look us in the eye and the reviews were poor.” Following sales and the influence of the album more than vindicated it. Included in the period are Mama Chicago, a musical devoted to the Prohibition Era, and Love For Sale, probably the best recording of the long-standing trio of the Westbrook with saxophonist Chris Biscoe, weaving a tale of sentiment and social protest through classic songs by Weil, Porter and Holst and original compositions on texts by Rimbaud, Blake, Kate Westbrook and Anne LePape. After Smith’s Hotel from 1983 Westbrook introduced the “infamous Smith’s Hotel chord”, a harmonic development that could be his own homologation: “a way of superimposing a pattern on another, a conventional chord with a kind of free counterpoint, which gives intervals and clusters.”

Two major albums for hatART of the ‘80s present very different tributes to composers: On Duke’s Birthday is a suite of original compositions while Westbrook-Rossano is based on rearranged versions of the Italian opera composer’s music. Westbrook always had a special relationship with Italy. Filippo Bianchi was instrumental in the commission of Westbrook’s Beatles project, Off Abbey Road, subsequently released on Enja, for the Reggio Emilia festival in 1988. Pompeo Benincasa from Catania Jazz invited Westbrook in 1992, with guest Italian trombonist Danilo Terenzi and French violinist Dominique Pifarely, for a concert that was recently released.

The latter double CD is a remarkable synthesis of Westbrook’s music from reinterpretations of Ellington and Weill to settings in music of Blake’s poetry in a vibrant live environment. The release is dedicated to the late Jon Hiseman, of Colosseum fame and sometime Westbrook collaborator, who died shortly after beginning work on the project. It washes away the dust of everyday life” and “If you make a mistake, make it loud! Make music out of it)” that stayed with most Messengers, even long after they left to form their own groups.

Russian trumpeter Valery Ponomarev is one of the many Messengers (Blakey reminded his players that they were always Messengers, even after becoming leaders themselves) who took the drummer’s often pithy statements about how to be a jazz musician to heart. This brief book compiles all the ones Ponomarev could remember. He then explains his interpretation of each piece of advice or philosophy, reminding instrumentalists that there is much to work on to make the best possible music and develop a fan base, sometimes things that aren’t so obvious.

Whether it is learning a lyric to song before you solo on it (to help understand the mood of the work), something non-Messengers like Ben Webster and Dexter Gordon both understood; emphasizing the importance of playing in public; hanging out at others’ shows and releasing new albums (“If you don’t appear, you disappear”); overlong solos (“They are applauding because they are happy you finished”); or keeping music fresh (in the studio, “The first take is the best take”), Blakey’s remarks stand the test of time. Ponomarev’s book should be mandatory reading, not only for aspiring young players, but also veterans who can take an audience, interview or their fellow musicians for granted.

For more information, visit cadillarcovers77.com

LABEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

good indicator of the label’s mindset. Improvisation is at the heart of the music, but there are no boundaries. Since taking over the label my concerns have been to curate John Jack’s legacy by protecting the tape archive, reissuing albums and releasing both projects he had planned and new material that to my mind would have been enigmatic to him. The goals of the label when it was founded were to document the scene and to support the artists. We continue to do that in our idiosyncratic way.”

For more information, visit cadillarcovers77.com

IN PRINT

University of the Jazz Messengers
Valery Ponomarev (BookBaby)

by Ken Dryden

A young jazz musician desirous of a professional career once he or she completes a college jazz program still has a lot to learn about what is expected by a bandleader or an audience. Sloppy appearance, looking bored or unhappy on stage, arriving late for a performance and overly long solos are some of the many pitfalls that musicians can take years to learn if they don’t first work for a seasoned leader.

Over-three plus decades, drummer Art Blakey groomed myriad young artists for success by teaching them, pushing them to compose and arrange for his band and to give their best at all times. But it was his frequent statements (“Music washes away the dust of everyday life” and “If you make a mistake, make it loud! Make music out of it”) that stayed with most Messengers, even long after they left to form their own groups.

Whether it is learning a lyric to song before you solo on it (to help understand the mood of the work), something non-Messengers like Ben Webster and Dexter Gordon both understood; emphasizing the importance of playing in public; hanging out at others’ shows and releasing new albums (“If you don’t appear, you disappear”); overlong solos (“They are applauding because they are happy you finished”); or keeping music fresh (in the studio, “The first take is the best take”), Blakey’s remarks stand the test of time. Ponomarev’s book should be mandatory reading, not only for aspiring young players, but also veterans who can take an audience, interview or their fellow musicians for granted.

For more information, visit vponomarev.com. Ponomarev live-streams May 13th at soapboxgallery.org.
It is hard to believe that almost eight years exactly after V-E Day, in Munich, birthplace of the Nazi Party, a radio program devoted exclusively to jazz would celebrate its 500th broadcast. "Midnight in Munich" (MM) aired three weeks weekly and featured period German stars. This jubilee concert took place at the Deutsches Theater München with Max Gregor Big Band (a young Klaus Ogerman at the piano), the Dixie Maumutors and The German All-Stars playing mostly American fare apart from "Mimi-Boogie" and "Festival Riff".

While Phontastic started out in the late '60s as a groundbreaking Freakbeat scenes in its Stockholm base, it did make a reappearance for an American purveyor of the genre in alto/soprano saxophonist and clarinetist Bob Wilber, who was active since the late 40s into the new millennium. He is now at the Café Swingel in Room Wilber, who was active since the late 40s into the new millennium. He is now at the Café Swingel in Room 1978 documenting the straightahead purveyor of the genre in alto/soprano saxophonist and clarinetist Bob Wilber, who was active since the late 40s into the new millennium.

This 2001 CD is percussionist Eddie Prevost's 74-minute improvisational title "composition" directed by guitarist Keith Rowe as part of the Music Now Festival, At The Roundhouse in London, Prevost and Rowe are part of a 20+ ensemble including fellow period members of AMM in tenor saxophonist Lou Care, cellist/pianist Cornelius Cardew and percussionist Christopher Hobbis, a future AMMER in pianist John Tilbury plus bassist Gavin Byars, live electronics from Hugh Davies and vocalist Maggie Nicols. On this program, Prevost is the only musician from Phontastic who appears on this release. He is joined by a group of musicians from the UK and Sweden who had never worked together before. The result is a stunning exploration of improvisation that is both exhilarating and mesmerizing.

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**MIDNIGHT IN MÜNCHEN**

Various Artists (Brunswick)

May 4th, 1953

**BIRTHS**

May 1

Ilia Sviatn 1931-2020

Shuley Horn 1934-2005

Carlos Ward 1940

James Newton b.1953

Kevin Harris b.1968

Ambrose Akinmusire b.1982

May 2

Flatt Smith 1923-83

Richard "Groove" Holmes 1931-91

Eddy Louiss 1941-2015

Mickey Bass b.1925

Keith Gunz b.1972

May 3

Jim 1920-2001

Jimmy Cleveland 1926-2008

Jazzie Morris b.1920

Johnny Fischer b.1930

John新聞 b.1948

Larry Ochs b.1949

Guillermo F. Brown b.1974

Matt Baker b.1976

Richard Havikins b.1981

May 4

Sinney Payne 1926-79

Maryland Fowler 1928-2006

Ellen Lewis 1923-2016

Ron Carter b.1937

Chuck Fuld b.1938

Richard Trott b.1948

Rudolph Mahanaphy b.1971

Jennife Malan b.1980

May 5

Kasty Jodin b.1937

Stanley Cowell 1941-2020

Pablo Aslan b.1962

May 6

Freddy Randall 1921-99

Donna Wright 1942-92

Fela EckerGG 1939-2021

Paul Dehn b.1953

Rob Silverman b.1954

May 7

Peter Jacobs 1938-92

Leon Abby 1930-75

Edward Inge 1936-88

Herbie Steward 1926-2003

Arthur Blythe 1940-2017

David Haney b.1953

Michael Formanek b.1958

May 8

Richard Nichols 1940-65

Mary Louis Williams 1910-81

Percy Heath trained as one

Kodji Jarrett b.1945

Jon-Erik Kellso b.1946

Meinrad Kneer b.1970

May 9

Kenny Simon 1902-81

Don Byrd b.1938

Ray Brown b.1938

Dennis Chambers b.1939

Ricardo Gallo b.1978

Phineas Newborn, Jr. b.1937

May 10

Fred Vinet 1907-79

Ralph Harris 1916-2004

Harry Edison 1913-91

Llew David 1913-91

Tad Dameron didn’t live very long (dying at 48 in 1956) but his influence on the bebop movement was significant. His "Tadd's Swing" remains a standard and "Phrontastic" is his title track.

May 11

Woody Herman 1913-86

Billie Holiday 1915-59

George Lewis b.1925

Bucky Pizzarelli b.1925

May 12

Paul Dunmall b.1953

Derick Finck b.1959

Mylly Tuppinen b.1959

May 13

Bob Wilber b.1928-72

Bucky Carlier b.1930

Billy Cobham b.1944

May 14

Fluxus 1948-96

Miles Davis 1955-91

Monk tribute band Sphere), bassist Darryl Jones, vocalist Pug Horton and a local band of Lars Erstrand, Dave McKenna, vocalist Pug Horton (concurrent with his membership in Monk tribute band Sphere), bassist Ron Carter and drummer Art Taylor playing six of Dameron’s classic tunes, most written in the late 40s.

May 15

Alphonse Mouzon 1939-92

John Lewis standard "S’il Vous _____"

Michael Warne b.1944

Bob Paris (b.1945)

May 16

Pee Wee Erwin 1913-81

Richard "Groove" Holmes 1931-91

Benjamin Duboc b.1969

Sheryl Bailey b.1966

May 17

Mike Mangini 1927-73

Red Holloway 1927-2012

Robert Glasper b.1979

May 18

Harry Turner 1943-89

Kai Winding 1929-88

Jim McNeill b.1954

Weasel Walter 1972

May 19

Carlinhos Brown b.1954

Cecil Taylor b.1979

Erick Moseholm b.1984

May 20

Tommy Gomina 1931-2013

Louis Smith 1935-2016

Robert 2013-17

May 21

Tommy Walker 1940-43

Tommy "Valdo" Horton 1930-2020

Lewis "Fip" Barnes b.1935

May 22

Sonny Rollins 1943-90

Erik Chareen 1946-2003

Stan Getz 1946-96

May 23

Jaco Pastorius 1946-91

Oscar Pettiford b.1946

May 24

Ric Flaherty 1948-91

Drummer Bellson

Herman Marty 1948-91

May 25

Marshall Allen 1924-2020

Miles Davis 1926-91

Chesterfield 1935-91

May 26

Sherry Baker b.1946

Ferry 1947-97

7" singles

May 27

Thad Jones 1947-97

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